

The Educational Philosophy Of the Sikh Gurus Dr Amrit Kaur Raina

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Forward

Language Department has already published a number of thesis approved by different universities for the awards of Ph.D. Degree. These are results of prolonged labour of the research scholars and highlight various aspects of language and literature which remained unexplored hitherto. The department has the pleasure to present to the readers another thesis entitled 'The Educational Philosophy of the Sikh Gurus' in this series.

Dr. Amrit Kaur Raina has made a research in depth to synthesize the philosophical aims of education as enunciated by the Sikh Gurus which stress all-round development of the individual personality of human beings as well as of the society. The writer has discussed the problems of formal education as also women's education, military education & adult education in general.

I hope the readers and scholars will highly appreciate the efforts of the Department in presenting to them this treasure of knowledge.

February 13, 1987

RAJINDER SINGH,
Director,
Language Department, Punjab

VIEWS

Dr. K.L. Seshagiri Rao, Professor of Religious Studies in the Department of Religious Studies Cocke Hall, University of Virginia writes, "The thesis entitled "A critical study of the Educational Philosophy of Sikh Gurus" is a well researched, carefully organized, properly documented and lucidly presented work. The valuable insights of the Sikh Gurus on the subject of education scattered throughout their writings, are captured and elaborated here in a systematic way. The work makes a significant contribution to an understanding of the theory and practice of the educational philosophy of the Gurus. The authors is to be congratulated upon the accomplishment of a solid piece of research work. The thesis merits publication. I believe that it will be well received both within and outside Punjab.

.....

Dr. Pritam Singh , Reader, Department of Measurement and Evaluation, N.C.E.R.T., New Delhi writes,
"This is perhaps the first thesis in which the candidate has researched upon all the aspects of Educational Philosophy of the Sikh Gurus. It is well documented and well written. The analysis is done quite objectively. This thesis, if published by the candidate, will be of immense use to prospective researchers who would like to research in the allied field."

P R E F A C E

The book embodies the research work carried out for the degree of Ph.D. in education. The inspiration for the research initially came to me from my father Late Prof. Harnam Dass who dedicated his whole life to the study of Sikhism . Through his constant encouragement and guidance he initiated me into the study of philosophy of the Sikh Gurus. He was ever a source of great inspiration to me.

In Dr. P.S Chanana, M.A.,M.ed., Ph.D. (Education), P.E.S. (1), former Principal, the Government College of Education, Faridkot, I was lucky to have a very capable guide for my study of the Educational Philosophy of the Sikh Gurus. His profound knowledge of Educational Philosophy, Indian History and Culture came to my help wherever I was stuck up in the difficult regions of my quest. His constant guidance and encouragement enabled me to complete this work.

I feel highly indebted to Dr. R.L Ahuja who on more than one occasion read several parts of my thesis and made very valuable suggestions.

I shall be failing in my duty if I do not thank Dr. Man Mohan Sehgal, Professor and Head, Hindi Department, Punjabi University, Patiala, Late Dr. Taran Singh, Head, Guru Granth Sahib Studies, Punjabi University, Patiala and Dr. S.S Kohli, Professorr and Head, Punjabi University, Chandigarh, who spared their precious time for discussions which went a long way in clearing my doubts.

It is on the suggestion of all these learned Professors and examiners of the thesis that the research work is given the form of a book, for the benefit of the students of the philosophy of Sikhism. The credit for this publication goes to the Language Department, Punjab which is ever ready to help the Scholars.

AMRIT KAUR RAINA

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The Sikh Gurus have left a deep impact on Indian life and thought. Their message came as a fresh breeze over the then parched land. Their teachings during the last about 500 years have been a source of light and life to millions of people.

The Gurus gave deep thought to various problems of human life. Religion, philosophy, social and political systems, education of man, defence of faith and honour of the nation, all these matters and many others received their serious attention. The views expressed by them and the remedies suggested by them stirred the sick and suffering nation into a new life of thought and action. The subjugation of the people for long had killed their initiative, self-reliance and self-confidence. The class distinctions were sharp and the doors of learning were open to a chosen few. The masses were steeped in ignorance, superstition and inertia. The Sikh Gurus tried to transform them into a spiritually, morally, socially and physically sturdy people. Education, a very important vehicle of social change, could not thus escape their attention.

Although not directly, the Gurus expressed their views on various aspects of education. In their writings and discourses we come across a number of references to the meaning of education, the role of education, the methodology of education, the duties of the learner, education and society, education and religion, value of discipline in life, and so on. But the views of the Gurus on education are so scattered in their works that one is apt to believe that they have not propounded any philosophy of education. It is true that a systematic philosophy of education as such was not discussed and developed by them. Surely they did not sit down to theorize as a modern educationist would do, nor did they carry on any experimentation in any laboratory school. Nevertheless, their thoughts on education lying here and there provide rich material to gauge their philosophy of education. After going through their educational ideas lying here and there, in their hymns, it is not difficult to piece them together and come to the conclusion that they had definite views on education.

Besides expressing their thoughts on various aspects of education, the Gurus took practical steps to spread reading and writing. Guru Nanak was the pioneer of a new educational movement. In the words of Teja Singh, "He enjoined upon his followers to open elementary schools in their villages, so that wherever there was a Sikh temple, there was a centre of rudimentary learning for boys and girls. This system has continued to very recent times and may be seen even now in certain villages." *

Elementary schools opened and attached with Dharamsalas during the time of the Gurus continued down to the first quarter of twentieth century. Surveying them during the

second half of the last century, Dr. Leitner remarked, "Respect for learning has always been the redeeming feature of the East. To this the Punjab has been no exception. There was not a mosque, a temple, a dharamsala that had not a school attached to it, to which the youth flocked chiefly for religious education." **

Guru Nanak's contribution to this educational movement was threefold. Education, both religious and ethical in character, was provided in the schools. Secondly, the mother tongue of the people although still not fully developed was used as the medium of instruction. Thirdly, the chief aim of enlightening the minds of the people was to be achieved in two ways by instructing the adults through sermons and discussions and by giving education to children from infancy. ***

Thus reading and writing became common among the followers of the Gurus. The new literacy drive spread among the Sikhs and a network of simple informal type of elementary schools sprang up to make education accessible to all. The movement grew and developed during the time of the later Gurus. While the first Guru gave education its new basis, substance and content, the second Guru started the new literacy movement. The tenth Guru, realizing the need of his time, greatly elaborated the training in defensive and offensive weapons which was originally initiated by the sixth Guru. He drew upon classics and enriched both the language and the educational literature. By his time seats of learning at Amritsar, Anandpur and Damdama Sahib came to be established. He sent five Sikhs to learn Sanskrit at Varanasi who came to be known as Nirmalas. These Nirmala Sadhus opened 'deras' at various places in Northern India for the propagation of literacy, Sikh religion and vedantic literature. The knowledge of three R's as well as skill in warfare henceforth became the essential equipment of a Sikh. The literacy drive of the masses went hand in hand with religious education. Every new dharamsala came to be a centre of education.

Strange as it may seem, it is, nevertheless, a fact that so far few systematic efforts have been made to study the educational ideas and practices of the Gurus and to evaluate and bring into limelight their contribution to education. The need for a careful and unbiased study of Gurus thinking on education is obvious.

The present study is an attempt to find out whether the Sikh Gurus had any specific educational philosophy and if that philosophy is of any purpose to us. Can we really find in their writings adequate material for a coherent theory of education? Do their ideas have any relevance for us who are witnessing rapid changes in education as a result of the fast changing social, economic and political institutions all the world over?

It is in this spirit of quest that this critical study of the educational thought of the Gurus has been undertaken.

- Teja Singh, Growth of Responsibility in Sikhism, Shiromani Gurudwara Parbhandhak Committee, Amritsar P. 11.

** G.W. Leitner, History of Indigenous Education in the Punjab Since Annexation and in 1882, Language Deptt., Punjab, Patiala, 1971, Intro. P. 1.

*** R.L Ahuja, Indigenous Education in the Panjab until Annexation with specific reference to the times of the Sikhs (unpublished Ph.D. Thesis), P. 185, 194.

CHAPTER II

THE MILIEU

To have a proper perspective of the evolution of the educational philosophy of the Gurus, it is essential to know the temper of their times and the political, religious, social, economic and cultural conditions of the period in which they lived. Times have got much to do in moulding man's outlook on life. It was in the context of the political, social and economic conditions then obtaining that the Gurus expounded their philosophy. Their 'Ought', was born of the then 'is'.

The period of the Gurus spread from 1469 to 1708 beginning with Bahlol Lodhi and ending with Aurangzeb. The social and political situation continued to be more or less the same till the consolidation of the Mughal empire by Akbar.

Political Conditions:

From the close of the tenth century to the time of Guru Nanak, successive waves of Muslim hordes poured into India from the North-West. As many as about sixty foreign invasions had taken place in five hundred years, thus on an average one invasion occurring every eight years. *1 These almost continuous invasions, associated with plunder and mass killings could not but affect the entire social, political and economic fabric of by far the largest area of northern India, Punjab being one of the worst sufferers as it lay on the way to Delhi. The bloody and ferocious invasion of Timur in 1394 A.D. caused widespread anarchy in the Hindustan. The Government at Delhi are completely paralyzed. An era of decline and breakup of the empire started.

Guru Nanak was born in 1469 when Bahlol Lodhi (1451-1489) was reigning at Delhi. It was an age of disintegration. The central authority was weak and centrifugal tendencies were strong. The smaller kingdoms were engaged in fighting among themselves and often encroached upon the territory of Delhi. India was thus a congeries of States during the fifteenth century and likely to be an easy prey to an invader like Babur.

Behlol's son, Sikandar Lodhi (1489-1517) was a bigoted Muslim. By his fierce religious persecution, he completely alienated the sympathies of the Hindus. The State assumed a theocratic character under him and he officially imposed Islam upon the Hindus. *2 Forcible conversions were ordered. His iconoclastic zeal found an expression in the destruction of Hindu temples at several places. At Nurwar, he broke down many Hindu temples and built mosques in their places. He entirely ruined the shrines of Mathura. *3 Their stone-images were given to the butchers for use as meat weights. *4 In Punjab the celebrated temples of Kangra and Jawalamukhi were demolished by him and their idols given to butchers. *5

After Sikandar Lodhi, Ibrahim Lodhi (1517-1526) ascended the throne of Delhi. He was foolish and head-strong ruler. It was during his rule that Babar invaded India in 1520. An orthodox Sunni in his religious views, Babar treated Hindus with contempt and recognized 'Jihad' (Holy War) as a sacred duty. He easily captured, sacked and burnt Lahore. Seeing his cruelties Nanak addressed God:

Thou hath sent yama disguised as the great Mughal Babar,
Terrible was the slaughter,
Loud were the cries of the lamenters
Did this not awaken pity in Thee; O Lord ? * 6

At the time of the capture of Saidpur by Babar, Guru Nanak and his companion Mardana were eye-witnesses. Guru Nanak cried in anguish when he saw the people being tortured by Babar and his troopers. "Who like a ravenous lion fell upon a herd of cows." *7 "It was death disguised as a Mughal who made war on us." *8 There was a general massacre of people and houses, mansions and palaces were burnt. Even the women were not spared. In agony Guru Nanak said:-

"He burnt houses, mansions and palaces
He cut princes to pieces and had them rolled in the dust,
The tresses that adorned these lovely heads,
And were parted with vermillion,
Have been shorn with cruel shears,
Dust has been thrown on their shaven heads,
Now they are dragged away with ropes round their necks,
Their necklaces are snapped and their pearls scattered,
Their beauty and wealth are their greatest enemies now,
Barbarious soldiers have taken them prisoners and disgraced them." *9

Babar laid the foundation of the Mughal empire in India. Neither he nor his son Humayun had the leisure nor the disposition to reorganize the administrative system. From Babar's occupation of the Punjab till the consolidation of Mughal Empire by Akbar, the Punjab had been the cockpit of various upheavals as the government was unstable.

The period of Akbar (1556 – 1605) can be called an era of reconstruction. He put the government on firm footing. The political stability provided by him continued upto the period of Aurangzeb.

During the period, the penal law was excessively severe. The penalties of mutilation and death were usually inflicted on the culprits. Force and torture were employed

to extort confession from the convicts. Corruption was the order of the day. Bribery was quite prevalent, every one offered it and every one accepted it.

" The qazi sat in judgment with rosary in his hands and after having accepted a bribe, gave judgment against the righteous cause. When his judgment was questioned, he quoted scriptures." *10

Bhai Gurdas stated the same fact in his 'warran' that bribery was much in vogue among the qazis*11 " Honours and places were freely bought and sold. During the Muslim rule, the Hindus had no voice in the politics and the administration of the country. Long-standing foreign yoke of terror and cruelty had reduced them to extreme servility and they had lost all sense of self- respect and self-confidence. They obeyed slavishly whosoever came to rule over them:

"Sin is the king, greed the minister,
Falsehood the mint-master,
And lust the deputy to take counsel with,
They sit and confer together,
The blind subjects out of ignorance,
Pay homage like dead men." *12

Religious Conditions:

During this period the Hindu religion had reached its lowest ebb. It was reduced to farce, mockery and hypocrisy. The priestly classes exploited the masses for their own selfish ends. They considered it their exclusive right to study scriptures. Rituals and ceremonies had chained the people. Life was viewed with extreme pessimism and was thought to be not worth living. The rigid caste system had led to moral degeneration. The Brahmin who was quite submissive to his Muslim neighbor, was tyrannical against his own Sudra brother, for whom he adopted a very dangerous weapon of social exclusion, contempt and hatred.

The religion was confined to peculiar forms of eating and drinking, peculiar ways of bathing and painting the forehead and other such mechanical observances. The worship of idols, pilgrimages to the Ganges and other sacred places, the observance of certain ceremonies like the marital and funeral rites, obedience to the mandates of the Brahmans and lavishing charitable gifts upon them, constituted almost the whole of Hinduism as it was then current among the masses. *13

As a majority of people suffered tyrannical treatment at the hands of Muslim rulers on the one hand, and contempt and hatred of the priestly classes on the other hand, it was no wonder, that most of the lower classes found it far better to join the ranks of the

oppressors rather than be spurned by the high-born Hindus and persecuted by the powerful Muhammadans. And those who did not compromise with such a life of dishonor and had a religious bent of mind had sought safety from persecution and death in the loneliness of the desert or the retirement of the forest and lived in single-minded investigation of truth.*14 That is why the yogis and sadhus who had retired in the caves of the mountains were in a large number.

The Hindus enjoyed little religious freedom during this period. The slaughtering of 'infidels' gave the Muslim rulers, a peculiar pleasure and they resorted to it frequently. Thousands of Hindu temples were destroyed. Being a Hindu was a disqualification and various type of taxes like toll-tax, pilgrim-tax and jazia were imposed with the object of curbing the 'infidels'. Guru Nanak wrote:

"Now the rule of the Sheikhas has come
They call primal Lord as Allah,
Such is the way of their government,
That they have taxed even the temples of the Hindu gods." *15

According to Professor J.N. Sarkar, the policy underlying the jazia was to increase the number of Muslims by putting pressure upon the Hindus. *16 The State encouraged conversions under force and oppression. The Hindus who got converted were handsomely rewarded.

The spirit of both Hinduism and Islam was hidden beneath a mass of formalities and extraneous observances. The unity of God-head was lost in the worship of numerous gods and goddesses. Empty ritualistic practices had taken the place of the real devotion of the heart. The Hindus and the Mohammadans quarreled, the Brahmin and the Mullah wrangled. Religious and political inequalities reigned supreme and there was strife, eternal strife everywhere. Guru Nanak was very sad to see what man had made of man. He was sorry to see that Pandit recited scriptures without understanding their meaning.*17 The yogis split their ears, smeared their bodies with ashes and without any divine knowledge went about wrecking their family life and that of their followers.*18 The religion was reduced to farce and mockery.

"Look at the mockery of religion,
That the man eaters are offering their prayers
to God after the Muslim fashion,
And the butchers have put on the sacred thread of Hinduism.
The Brahmins visit the houses of these imperialists,
And dance to their tunes for the sake of bread.
So, they too get the same relish of life,
As their bosses have. *19

Social and Cultural Conditions:

The centuries of invasion, foreign misrule and persecution had produced the greatest depression and the spiritual subjection and stagnation had aggravated the demoralization of the Hindus to an enormous degree. This demoralization made them introvert, peevish and escapist. They developed inferiority complex and feeling of helplessness. The Hindu mind had become so slavish that in all ways of life it yielded to the Muhammadan way of thinking. The people were so cowed down in spirit that they would pay homage to any one who came to rule over them. They did not have the strength to protect their life and honour. The occasional pricks which the government and its officials inflicted on the Hindus went a long way to suppress them. The State imposed great disabilities upon the non-Muslims while the Muslims were the favourite subjects of the State. The highest offices in the State were held by the Muslims and elevation to position of honour was generally determined by royal will and not by merit. The Hindus were not allowed to join the army even if they wanted. *20 They were over-taxed. Jazia not only put financial burden on them but it was also a constant reminder to them of their inferior position. Guru Arjan was imposed a fine of two and a half lakhs by Jahangir for helping Khusru and when he found it too hard to pay, he was publicly executed. Thus the Hindus fretted and chafed against the disabilities imposed on them. In a climate of distrust and humiliation, they could not hold their head high. They had to bear the arrogance of the Muslims, both foreigners and the converts who considered themselves superior because they belonged to the ruling class. There was no bond of sympathy between the Hindus and Muslims. The Hindus in their own land not only lost political power but also suffered a loss in their social status.

Under such circumstances, it was natural for the Hindus to please the ruling class. They started learning the language of their masters and wearing their dress to be in their good books. According to Greenless Duncan, "Many found it useful, while in their hearts keeping a certain sentimental attachment to their ancestral religion, to conform outwardly with that of the conqueror, adopting Muslim dress, even attending the mosques and repeating the Muslim creed in public so as to secure immunity from toll-tax and persecution alike, and open the door to their own social and financial advancement for it was impossible for a loyal Hindu to gain worthy employment at that time or to hold office in the royal court." *21 This fact is also confirmed by Guru Nanak, "The Kshatariyas once proud of their cultural heritage had abandoned their noble traditions and even their mother tongue and were patronizing the language of the conquerors to get status and good job." *22

They (Hindus) have all assumed the Muslim garb;
Even God hath been robed in blue.
Even the language of God has changed,
The people are addressing one another as Mian,
Mian every where.* 23

The Islamic state fostered luxury among the members of the ruling class. The highest offices in the State were held by Muslims. The easy acquisition of wealth and the participation in the festivities of the court led to great vices. The lives of kings were governed by wine and women. Music and dancing were the important amusements of the rich and the poor. With the exception of a few, all the Muslim rulers were fond of drinking, merry making, keeping concubines and many dancers.

"Harems, full of the wives and concubines of the Sultans and Princes of the royal blood were kept in the apartments of the royal palace." *24

Socially, the Hindus were divided into their traditional four classes which were further divided into a number of castes and sub-castes. The rigidity of caste-system had created water-tight compartments which had resulted in the total annihilation of any sense of citizenship or of loyalty to the country as a whole. "The Brahman stood at the top of the social system. He was considered as the very best among the Hindus. Religion was his exclusive monopoly. According to Albaruni, only the Brahmans and the Kashtriyas could learn the 'Vedas' and therefore 'moksha' was meant for them alone. The Vaishayas and the Sudras were deprived of all sacred knowledge." * 25

There was little inter-mixing among the different castes. The Hindus did not associate with the low-caste Hindus. The Sudras were most shabbily treated. The people of other three classes were required to attain purification by bathing with clothes on, if touched by a Sudra. In such circumstances owing to the slogan of social equality preached by Islam, to the lower classes, conversion seemed to offer a panacea for all their social grievances.

" The hand that rocks the cradle rules the world." But during this period woman was the worst sufferer. She did not enjoy respectable position. She was considered to be equal to a man's shoe and an object of utility. Even saints like Kabir and Tulsidas spoke ill of her. With the advent of Muslims, her position worsened all the more. She often suffered disgrace at the hands of invaders. Young girls were carried off by them. To save themselves from this ignominy rich parents would murder their daughters at birth. Female infanticide was quite prevalent among the Hindus in Punjab during the Sultanate period. Early marriage was adopted by one and all. The birth of a girl was looked upon as a curse. The customs of Jauhar, sati, female infanticide, child marriage and purda had created a veritable hell for her. On the frontiers of the Punjab, there was the open trade in women. Prostitution was rampant and the profession of dancing girls was profitable and was patronized by those who should have been censors of the public morals. *26 Traffic in women was a recognized custom of the day.

Economic Conditions:

During the early days of Muslim conquest, the inhabitants of India were robbed of their wealth by the Muslim invaders. Vast booty was carried off by Mahmud of Ghazni from

this country. Timur's invasion in 1399 caused much confusion and drained the wealth of the country. *27 The trading and commercial communities were demoralized and dislocated.

Agriculture was the main vocation of the People. The interest shown by the Mughal emperors in effecting improvements in the means of irrigation and in giving impetus to the adoption of better methods of cultivation played no less a part in making Punjab, the granary of India. The vastness and fertility of land had made life easy and inexpensive. The life being simple and the wants being few, the villages were self-contained units. Economically the people were divided into two classes, the aristocrats and the poor people. The rich rolled in wealth, while the lot of the poor was miserable.

There was a great contrast between the splendor of the court and the squalor and poverty of the cottage. The difference between the standard of the wealthy classes and the peasants was almost antipodal. Foreign visitors have dwelt at length upon the magnificence of royal processions and festivals at the capital and the wealth and luxury of the nobles. "While the ruling and official classes rolled in opulence and luxury, the tillers of the soil had very low standard of living." * 28 Even the Muslims were divided mainly in these two classes. The aristocrats spent all they had in luxury keeping a number of servants and slaves. The condition of the lower class consisting of workmen, labourers, farmers, petty shop-keepers, domestic servants and slaves was very miserable as their wages were very low. "The workmen could hardly get a single meal a day regularly. Their houses were wretched and practically unfurnished and they did not have sufficient covering to keep themselves warm in winter." * 29

The Hindus were over taxed and Albaruni writes that Alaudin took from the Hindus of Doab fifty percent of their produce. They had no inducement to accumulate wealth and the bulk of them led a life of poverty and want earning just enough to maintain themselves and their family. The standard of living among the subject classes was low and the incidence of taxation mainly fell upon them." *30

It is against this back-drop of history that one has to view the life and activities of Guru Nanak and his immediate successors. It was under these circumstances that a school of religious reformers known as Bhakti movement arose in India. It was the time of revival and religious reformation. The main object of its leaders like Kabir, Nanak and the succeeding Gurus and the sufi saints was to give consolation and solace to the suffering humanity. They tried to remove the bitterness prevailing between the followers of Hinduisim and Islam. With the lapse of time, the Muslims realized the impossibility of completely crushing out the Hindus, while the Hindus learnt by slow and painful experience that it was useless to wage perpetual war against foes who had come to stay in the land. Time applied its healing balm to old bitterness and cultivated minds on both sides began to desire some sort of rapport between the two people. "The temple and the mosque are the same, the Hindu worship and the Muslim prayer are the same. All men are the same; it is through error that they appear different – Allah

and Abhekh are the same, the Purans and the Quran are the same, they are all alike. It is one God who created all" * 31 emphasized Guru Gobind Singh.

Mardana, a muslim was a life-long companion of Guru Nanak. Owing to his liberal teachings, Guru Nanak had Hindus as well as Muslim followers. Guru Ram Dass asked Mian Mir, a Muslim devotee to lay the foundation-stone of Harmandir – the Sikh temple. Guru Har Gobind and Guru Gobind Singh had Muslims in their army. Thus the Gurus tried to bridge the gulf between the Hindus and Muslims." God will not ask man", said Nanak, "of what race and religion you are. He would ask him, what have you done." True religion did not consist in external practices but in the inward discipline of love, faith, mercy and humility expressed in righteous and compassionate deeds. Guru Nanak asked the Hindus to become good Hindus; and the Muslims to become good Muslims.

"Make mercy your mosque,
Faith your prayer-mat,
And righteousness your Quran,
Make humility your circumcision,
Uprightness your fasting,
And you will be a true Muslim
Make good works your Kabah,
Truth your pir,
And compassion your creed and your prayer,
Make the performance of what pleases God your rosary,
And, Nanak, he will uphold your honour. *32

The religion preached by the Gurus was very simple, direct, straight-forward, and practical. They did not indulge in theorizing. "Truth is high but higher still is truthful living", said Nanak. They were against mechanical worship, rituals and ceremonies. Religion did not consist in a patched coat or a yogi's staff or in ashes smeared over the body. The Gurus condemned the yogis and sadhus who were just parasites on the society and asked them to lead the lives of house holders and earn their livelihood with the sweat of their brow. The Gurus were critical of the rich people who exploited the poor to spend luxurious lives as is evident from the example of Malik Bhago, Karoria and Duni Chand and made them to utilize their earnings for the benefit of the needy.

To remove the barriers of caste and creed, high and low, rich and poor, they started the institutions of sangat (sitting together and singing the praises of God) and Pangat (Community dinning). At the initiation ceremony, Guru Gobind Singh made all the five Sikhs belonging to the different castes to drink nectar from the same bowl. They upheld the cause of down-trodden and lower classes, Guru Nanak preferred to dine with Lalo, a low caste Hindu than to stay with Malik Bhago, a high caste rich man. The Gurus preached emphatically –

All men are great, none of them is low,
There is one light of Absolute God alone which pervades all." * 33

In a world over-whelmed with tyranny and reduced to blind submission, the Gurus dedicated their lives to the service of mankind and preached brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God. Their message consisted in the recognition and acceptance of the one and only one God in place of hundreds of gods and goddesses. The common people who had lived for long in spiritual bondage of the Brahamans, women and low-caste people who had suffered privations at their hands, found a message of hope in what the Gurus taught. They taught the people in their own language and gave moral and religious instruction to thousands who did not know even a word of Sanskrit.

The Gurus raised their voice against the tyranny and oppression of those times. Unlike Kabir, Guru Nanak had greater organizational capacity. He gave a well-knit form to his faith and appointed a successor. The first four Gurus carried on his work peacefully without any interference from the State. Akbar's attitude was very friendly towards the Sikh Gurus. He is said to have visited Goindwal twice, to meet Guru Ram Dass and Guru Arjan Dev. He even made a gift of a tract of land on which was laid the foundation of the holy city of Amritsar. *34 His policy of non-interference helped the Gurus, both directly and indirectly to further their socio-religious and socio-economic interests. But, then, the tide turned and during the reigns of Jahangir, Shahjahan and Aurangzeb, the imperial policy towards the Sikhs was unkind. The fifth and the ninth Gurus fell victim to the general policy of persecution of the Hindus pursued by Jahangir and Aurangzeb.

"Guru Arjan's death is the great turning point in the development of the Sikh community as from that time the struggle commenced that changed the entire character of the reformatory religious movement." *35 The sixth Guru Har Gobind was exhorted by his dying father. "To sit fully armed on his throne and maintain an army to the best of his ability. *36 The period of Guru Hargobind was the period of open hostilities with the Mughal Government. The sixth Guru was the first to appeal to arms. The tenth Guru put the army on a regular footing. In his hands the Sikhs became fearless soldiers, ready to sacrifice their all for the protection of their honour. He roused the dormant energies of a vanquished people and filled them with a lofty longing for social freedom and national ascendancy. They were filled with new courage and hope to fight against the heavy odds of life.

To push back the wave of conversion of Hindus to Muslim religion, the Gurus exposed the beauty of the Hindu religion. Guru Gobind Singh awakened the people with the help of their cultural heritage. Guru Arjan, Guru Teg Bahadur and the two small children of Guru Gobind Singh preferred death over Islam. By these sacrifices, the Gurus breathed a new spiritual vitality among the people and inspired a new divine confidence in their religion and culture.

The Gurus were no recluse from family and society. They enjoined upon themselves and their disciples, strict and faithful carrying out of the duties and obligations of a house-holder. A few of the Gurus extended active patronage and encouragement to trade and commerce. Interest of trade and commerce were further served by the foundation of a number of new villages which grew in towns and cities like Kartarpur, Anandpur, Amritsar and quite a few others which became centres of trade and commerce.

Thus, in those trying circumstances "grew up a well organized militant, socio-religious organization, economically all but self-sufficient, provided with an army, a series of towns and cities and a Padshah who was at once the temporal and spiritual ruler of the community." * 37

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CHAPTER III

GENERAL PHILOSOPHY OF THE SIKH GURUS

The answer to every educational philosophy is ultimately influenced by our philosophy of life. Although few formulate it, every system of education must have an aim and the aim of education is relative to the aim of life. *1

An adequate philosophy of life is a prerequisite for a sound philosophy of education. The purposes of education are always relative to the ends of living nor can they be understood apart from life. In order to understand the educational thinking of Gurus, it is necessary to know their philosophy of life. What they thought of God, the universe, man, truth and values, will have a deep relation with their ideas on education. Where they have not expressed any view on some aspects of education it may be possible to judge what they would have said if they had got time to think seriously about them.

Concept of God

The fundamental doctrine (Mulmantra) of Guru Nanak's 'Japji' gives in nutshell the concept of God of the Sikh Gurus. ' God is absolute one, Eternal Reality, Creator of all things. He is without fear and without enmity. He is not subject to time. He is beyond birth and death. He is known by the Guru's grace. *2. The vital expression of the One is through the many, through the infinite plurality of the creation, in the language of the school boy:-

" Thou Thyself art the tablet, the pen,
And the writing on it,
Talk of one alone, Nanak,
Why mention a second ?
Thou thyself prevalent every where." * 3

His manifestation may be many, but He alone is and there is no other. He Himself is Brahma, Vishnu and Shiva. *4 "My master is one. He is one brother and He alone exists. *5. God does not take birth. All the gods and incarnations (Avtars) are created by Brahaman. Therefore they are not to be considered as Brahaman. The God of the Gurus is both Nirguna and Saguna, absolute and conditioned, unmanifest and manifest. He the unmanifest is manifest also. *6 For the Gurus, God in His primal aspect is Nirguna, absolute, unconditioned, devoid of all attributes. In this absolute aspect, God is unknowable, completely beyond the range of human comprehension. But God has endowed Himself with attributes

which bring Him within the compass of man's understanding. There is certainly a revelation of God. He, the Nirguna of His own violation became Saguna in order that man might know Him and knowing Him enter into a unitive relationship with Him. He the Formless and Ineffable One is immanent in His creation. He, the One pervades all. *7 "This universe that thou seest is the manifestation of Hari. * 8 The whole creation is manifestation of God. He is all pervading but transcendent. The Gurus have combined the Aryan idea of immanence with the Semitic idea of transcendence.

"Thou hast thousands of eyes and yet Thou hast no eye.
Thou hast thousands of forms and yet no form.
Thou hast thousands of holy feet and yet no feet.
Thou hast thousands of fragrance and yet without fragrance.
I am dazed by such a wonder." * 9

God the omnipotent and omniscient is also God the omnipresent. "He is in the mountains, in the caves, in the earth and in the skies, He is here, He is there. He is in time and in space. Yet he is unknowable and without form. * 10 "This formless Lord pervades every heart. Everything is illumined by His light. God who dwells in all his creation has His particular abode in the human heart. * 11

" I perceived Him in every heart.
Thou who dost pervade the universe,
Thy light shines in every heart. * 12

Everything is born out of God and is finally absorbed in him.

From one fire, millions of sparks of fire arise,
Though rising separately, they unite again in the fire,
As from the heap of dust, several particles of dust fill the air,
And on filling it again blend with the dust,
As in the storm millions of waves are produced,
The waves being made of water all become water,
So from God's form non-sentient things are manifested,
And springing from Him shall be united in Him again. * 13

God is the ultimate Eternal reality. He Himself is the Creator, Sustainer and Destroyer. He Himself is Brahma, Vishnu and Siva. For countless eons, there was no creation. It pleased Him and He created the universe. "Being of various kinds, colours and names – He wrote them all with a flowing pen. If anyone knew how to record the number what an immense account it would be !what power, what beauty of form, what gifts ! Who can guess them ? With a single command He unfurled creation and by that command there sprang forth thousands of rivers." * 14

God does not merely create. Having brought the world into being He watches over it and cares for it. "He who created the world watches over it, appointing all to their various tasks." * 15 Having created the world, God does not remain aloof, a mere witness or a non-doer. The creation is not merely a play of 'Maya' or 'Prakirti'. God is a participant in the life of the universe which he has established, watching, directing and upholding its path day and night.

God, the Creator and Sustainer is also God, the Destroyer (Mahan Kal) and Recreator. "He who created also destroys..... Having destroyed He builds and having built He destroys. Casting down He raises up and raising up He casts down. * 16

According to the Gurus God is a sovereign Lord, the wielder of absolute authority, the possessor of unqualified power ---- The cosmos is working under His Hukam (divine order) "From his fear the wind blows, the rivers flow, the fire burns, Indra and death do their duty, the sun and the moon move along their orbits." * 17 But still God is graceful, merciful and benevolent. The Gurus believe in a personal God, a God of grace to whom man responds in love. He is generous and kind. He gives unlimited gifts to human beings. He is Father, Mother, Friend and Brother of Man. He is Hari, Ram and Gopal. He is also Allah, Khuda and Sahib. His manifestations may be many but He alone is and there is no other.

In Gurbani God has been spoken as Sridhar or wielder of the sword. Asursinghar or killer of devils and Dharm Rakshiak or defender of faith. This aspect of God as a mighty power has been greatly emphasized by Guru Gobind Singh whose concept of God differs from the rest of the Gurus in certain respects. His concept of the wonderful lord is given in his works Jaap Sahib, Akal Ustat, Bachitar Natak and chandi charitar. The Lord of chandi charitar is reverence commanding Sword, All Steel, the protector of commoners. His God is fully armed and wrapped in steel strong enough to crush all evil and to protect all good. He is Shiv as well as Shakti. He is a Sword or a double-edged sword, one edge of power temporal and the other of power spiritual.

The idea of 'Martial God' is further conveyed by Guru Gobind Singh in war like names that he gives Him. He calls Him Asipan, the Holder of Steel, Asidhar, the Holder of Sword, Asidhuj, with sword on His Flag, Kharagketu, with sword on His Flag, Sastrapane-the holder of striking weapons, Bhagauti-Sword, Kharagdhari----the wearer of sword. For the tenth Guru the sword is the symbol of God Himself. It performs the double role of preserving the good and destroying the evil in the world. The Guru hails the sword in these words:-

"Thou bestowest happiness on the good,
Thou terrifies the evil,
Thou scatterest sinners
I seek Thy protection,
Hail, Hail !to the creator of the world

The savior of creation, My cherisher,
Hail, Hail to thee O sword." * 18

Concept of Nature

In the order of creation, Sikhism places God, first. The Absolute Himself created Himself. The second thing He created was nature in which He installed Himself to view the play of creation. He is blossoming in limitless beauties of nature for self-fulfillment and enjoyment. In the unlimited vernal expanse of nature, He is unfolding His beauties and making them bloom eternally. In Gurbani, vernal God and His vernal manifestations of the world have been praised thus:-

"Verily, O Nanak, the Perfect One is making
His beauties blossom in the form of his creation and enjoying them." * 19

" Thou art the Tree, thou that Branches off,
Thou art the Blossoms, too.
Thou art the Subtle, Thou the Apparent
Thou the Ocean, the Foam and the Bubble
Without Thee, I see not another, O Dear." * 20

"Verily God Himself is eternal spring,
And all His manifestation is His Garden." * 21

In Gurbani nature has been called 'Oudrat', Abode, Shrine, Temple, Home, Play, Workshop, Play-ground, Garden and divine manifestation of God. Nature is regarded as sacred school of education and field of creative action. It is the wonderful book of His revelations. God speaks to man through nature. He, the Formless, One has His abode in nature.

"He who has created the world in which He abides immanent.
That Lord may be recognized through nature
Seated in nature, God watches with delight
What He has created." * 22

"In nature we see the Lord
In Nature we hear His speech
Nature inspires devotional reveries
In nature is the essence of joy and peace." * 23

The Gurus are great lovers and devotees of nature. They call it as Sagun or manifest God. They feel God's presence and association in it and receive his inspiration and

loving spiritual touch from it. They regard it as their spiritual mother and spend most of their time in its edifying comradeship. Guru Nanak has painted the beauties of nature with the consummate skill of an artist in Japji, Asa-di-war, Onkar and Sidhgoshti. This beautiful song from 'Arti' stands in good comparison with mystic poetry of modern times.

In the disc of the sky
The sun and moon shine as lamps,
The galaxy of stars twinkle like pearls,
All zephyr is incense the winds are fanning
All the woods are bright with flowers,
Oh, savior of the world,
Thine arati (adoration) is wonderful indeed ! * 24

Nature influences our body, mind and soul. Nature moulds our personality. In natural environment communion between God and man takes place easily. It inspires devotional reveries in man. That is why the mystic poets sing the influence of changing seasons on the longing soul eager to meet the Lord. Mahadevi Verma, the modern mystic Hindi poetess has beautifully described how communion between God and soul takes place in the lap of nature. The Gurus have also described the beauty of the twelve months and its effect on the longing soul.

"Lowering clouds have over-spread the heavens
It raineth pleasantly and love comforteth my soul and body." * 25

"In Assu and Kartik, the cool season,
I thirst for God and make preparation to meet Him." * 26

Our ancient rishis were fully conscious of the great powers of nature. That is why they worshipped natural powers in the form of gods and goddesses. According to Guru Gobind Singh also nature is the very manifestation of God and the special powers of nature are called gods and goddesses. * 27 Guru Nanak has also emphasized the worship of these natural gods in Japji.

"Air is the Guru, Water is the father,
Great earth is the mother and
Days and nights are nurses male and females;
Surely all the children of the world are,
Playing the sport of life under their supervision." * 28

The gods and goddesses represent special powers of God. By identifying ourselves with Shivji, Brahma and Indra, we can develop their powers in our lives. For example

Siva symbolizes divine intelligence, wisdom, pure consciousness while Shakti is delusion, darkness, ignorance." * 29 Guru Amar Dass says:-

"Siva, the Light has illumined my inner-being,
And Shakti, the darkness is dispelled." * 30

The Gurus regard nature as sacred school of education and field of creative action. Guru Nanak has given a very nice description of this educational power of nature in the four stanzas 16, 17, 18, 19 of Jap Ji.

In the 16th stanza of Jap Ji, Guru Nanak says that the nature is unlimited in its expanse. Its power of sustenance is Dharma of God. It consists of limitless energies and beauties. In the next stanza he says that all powers of meditation, love, worship, austerity, divine wisdom, charity, sacrifice are being inspired by nature and they are leading human beings towards God realization. * 31

In 18th stanza, Guru Nanak says that all negative forces of folly, ignorance, theft, unlawful livelihood, cruel government, slaughter, sin, crime, fault are also the creation of God's nature and they are necessary for the evolution of opposites in the world. In the next stanza he says that there are elements of education in nature and they are responsible for the enlightenment of life. From the Immanent Indwelling spirit in nature have emerged books of wisdom, history, science and divine knowledge. It is through the grasp of these educational elements in nature that we get the following advantages:

"That we evolve name and its praises in life,
That we get hold of wisdom, music and art of life,
That we use the language of writing and speaking,
And that we express our pre-ordained destiny of life in noble deeds. * 32

At the end of each stanza, the Guru says that God's nature is wonderful in its wisdom and enlightenment. It is expression of God's will and name. formless God resides in it. So nature must be appreciated continuously to make the individual and collective life happy and blissful.

But the most wonderful song of Guru Nanak about nature is given in Asa-di-war. In this song, three most important things are worthy of being noticed. First, the nature is the very life and self of God and second that it is all life (sarab akar) all love (sarab piar) and all wisdom (sarab vichar).

"Through nature we see, through nature we hear,
From nature comes fear and from nature true happiness
The Vedas, the Puranas, the western scriptures,

And all thinking is the gift of nature
From nature evolve the ideas of good and bad,
And from nature the ideas of honour and dishonor." * 33

Concept of Reality

For the Sikh Gurus, God is the supreme and ultimate Reality. The essence of this supreme Reality or Being permeates the entire phenomenal existence. The super structure of this phenomenal world is based on truth, which is Reality. God is transcendent Reality out of which spring millions of relative realities. God, soul, mind and matter make one series and are in essence the same.

"When, thou, O Creator, projected Thyself,
All creatures of the earth assumed diverse shapes." * 34

"Some (creatures) live in water, some on land and some fly in the skies. God made them and He will destroy them too. As light blendeth with darkness and darkness with light, so all things have sprung from Him and shall be united in Him. * 35

The Gurus metaphysics holds this universe to be an expression of the hidden Reality and not merely a grand illusion or deception. The world is not ever lasting. Therefore, it is called illusion or false (mithya or Kur). But the Gurus have not accepted the stand of Shankara (jagat mithya Brahm Satyam) that God is real and world is false and illusory. They consider the world real like the real God. * 36 From the root of reality, reality springs. He, from the Absolute Essence became the manifest truth. This world is the abode of True One, the True One dwells in it. * 37 What is real is true and what is true is real.

Real are thy realm and real Thy universes,
Real Thy worlds and real the created forms,
Real are thine acts and real Thy purposes,
Real is Thy fiat and real Thy court,
Real is Thy order and real Thy word,
Real is Thy mercy and real Thy mark of grace,
Millions call upon Thee as True reality,
Real is Thy energy Thou hast created,
Real is Thy name and real Thy praise,
Real is Thy nature, Eternal Sovereign. * 38

The world we see is the outward manifestation of God. We can visualize him through it. These ideas of the Gurus are more in conformity with the modern realists who opine that reality can be found in the world as it is, the world of natural law and order. For the

realists ultimate reality inheres in the very law and order of the natural world itself. * 39 This reality is to be found in the world as it is – the world of natural law and order, of cosmic regularity and scientific exactitude. * 40

Real self of man is Jiva or the soul. Behind the apparent man, there is the real man, that is Atman or soul. Man is usually and ordinarily not aware of this Reality, the psychic entity called the atman or soul which lies within. Due to the veil of ignorance (Maya) man is not aware of this reality. But God and soul are identical in the same way as Fire and spark or the sun and its rays or as the mirror and its reflection. There is a difference not of essence but that which exists between a drop of water and the endless ocean. The finite soul, is eternal and a part of Infinite Reality, that is God.

“Oh mind thou art the form of God,
Like the jyoti, illumined light of the Lord. * 41

This real self of man is jiva or soul. This real self or Atman is the expression of universal Reality. When man begins to see the same Atman behind the diverse manifestations, he becomes more consistent. The knowledge about the real self leads to spiritual growth. This knowledge has not to be found in exterior objects but stands veiled within the Infinite self. One has only to lift the veil of delusion (Maya) to remove the anjana (collyrium) to discover the Niranjana. The union of the soul with the Absolute is the stage of sanyoga through a process of meditation on the name and is linked to a ray uniting with the sun and water into water. * 42

Now the question arises, it is possible to fathom the fathomless Lord ? How can he be apprehended ? Is it possible for human understanding to grasp the nature of God ? God is ultimately incomprehensible, ultimately beyond human apprehension. He is beyond the bounds of human understanding. The intellect of man is strictly limited in this respect. He is above sensory experience. But man has got the faculty of mystic intuition and insight. By this intuitive realization, the unheard becomes heard, unperceived becomes perceived and unknown becomes known. But this spiritual experience is subjective and not verifiable. In the words of Kabir the tale of love is difficult to describe. “The ultimate essence of God is beyond all human categories, far transcending all powers of expression. Only this experience can He be truly known. Man must indeed seek to give human expression to this mystical experience and Guru Nanak’s works are diverted to this very end but the human expression can communicate no more than a glimpse of the ultimate Reality. * 43

Concept of Man

The Sikh Gurus are both great idealists and humanists in their conception of man. For them man is the measure of all things. He is the crown of creation. He is the noblest

creation of God. According to Guru Arjan Dev there are eighty four lakhs of creatures in the world, but man is the paragon of God's creation. * 44

He regards man as the lord of the earth
"All other forms of life are for your service, O man,
You are the lord of this earth." * 45

Man is a small universe of body, mind, soul and God. What is in the universe is also to be found in the human body and he who seeks will find it. * 46

"Such is the divine play of the Creator,
That He has reflected the whole cosmos in the human body." * 47

The Sikh Gurus have sung many songs about the greatness of man. They consider him the very essence of God and the living abode of God. Human body is the palatial temple of God. Guru Amar Dass considers man as an image of light and asks him to recognize his essence.

"You are the embodiment of light, O man,
Recognize the essence of your own self." * 48

To be born as a human being is a rare privilege because it is through human life that God can be realized.

"Human life is the shrine of God,
Because it is through it that He can be realized." * 49

The Sikh Gurus conceive of man as a great cosmic reality, a likeness or image of God lost in the whirl of birth and death in search of itself. Human being is not a mere body. In the body there is light which has been placed there by the Timeless Being.

"O my body, The Lord imbued thee with light,
and then thou comest into this world." * 50

God and soul are identical in the same way as fire and spark or as the sun and its rays and the mirror and its reflection. There is difference not of essence, but that which exists between the drop of water and the endless ocean.

God is in man and man is in God. Shorn of ego, the self merges itself in the Brahma and Brahma flows freely into the self. It is not essential that the drop should enter the

ocean and get lost in its vastness but it is equally possible for the vast ocean to flow into the individual stream of consciousness. The result is identical.

"The drop is contained in the ocean,
The ocean in the drop,
But who can understand it ?
Only the one who comes to know the way." * 51

Soul is immortal like the immortal God. Like Gita the Gurus also believe that the body returns to dust but what dwells in the body is not destroyed with it.

"Know this body as mortal O good people,
That Ram who dwells in it is ever lasting." * 52

Before creation, the soul dwells in God. It existed before coming into the human body and will endure after its destruction. And according to its actions, will either be reborn or will dwell in a state higher than that of man. The soul has come into this body to achieve perfection. So long as it does not reach perfection it is subject to birth and death. It carries the impression of actions which it performs and moulds its nature accordingly.

"O mind engage in actions suited to your ideal
You will become the God you serve;
You will reap as you sow, that cannot be gain-said." * 53

A man gets the reward of his own acts,
He reaps what he sows." * 54

The Sikh Gurus have depicted God as the spouse and human soul as the female seeking union with Him. To achieve this union man must make effort to reduce egoism and make room for virtue and higher values of life. The Formless One has put the seed of knowledge in human soul. That seed can be developed and union with Him attained. That is why the Gurus emphasize the performance of right actions on the part of man. Human life is a rare opportunity. It should not be wasted in the pleasures of the world, in lust, attachment, anger and greed. The purpose of human life is to seek Him and find Him and be united with him. According to the Gurus 'Maya' which has also been created by God, separates man from ultimate Reality. The ego of man constitutes the fetters and makes him wander in transmigration again and again. But these fetters can be broken by right living, name-meditation, service of mankind, divine knowledge and guidance of the true teacher. For Guru Nanak the key to understanding of man's nature is an understanding of the human faculty which is called 'Man' (mind). Cleanse the 'Man' and it becomes a fitting abode for the Name.

‘Control it and you will no more wander away from the one with whom you seek union. But let it retain its impurity, let it remain unbridled and the penalty will be death. * 55

Man is endowed with great powers and faculties ‘Within the mind are the jewels and the rubies, whose worth is infinite’ * 56 Man has got a storehouse of energy. He has great potentialities to solve his own problems through reason, judgment and knowledge. He can carve out his destiny through his own efforts. If guided and inspired properly, he can work wonders. But in him we find the play of opposites. If he controls his evil impulses, his ‘haumai’ (ego) and attunes himself to God, he becomes a Gurmukh, a God-dedicated soul. But if he forgets God and does not control his evil impulses, he degenerates and becomes a ‘Man Mukh’ (Self-willed, away from God). On the basis of his actions and tendencies, the Gurus have divided man into two categories ‘Manmukh’ and ‘Gurmukh’. The ‘Manmukh’ is attached to worldly objects. He is lost in pride, sin, wealth, worldly allurements and sensual enjoyments. His desires are unlimited.

The ‘Gurmukh’ or Brahmgyani (a man having divine knowledge and experience) or Khalsa (the pure) is the ideal man of the Gurus. The outstanding qualities of the ‘Gurmukh’ or Brahmgyani as explained in the ‘Adi Granth’ and Bhai Gurdas are the same. The ‘Gurmukh’ is the purest of the pure. He is extremely humble. His mind is enlightened. He is a liberated soul, free from bondage. He is not proud. He serves humanity. He has got great patience, compassion and peace. He is above ill will and hatred. He fights all evil. He helps the destitute. He contemplates over the higher Reality. He is imbued with divine knowledge. He is absorbed in the love of God. He is a saint, a philosopher, a king and a recluse.

Brahmgyani in the purest of the pure,
Like swift-flowing water with which dust cannot mingle.
Brahmgyani is illumined in mind,
Like the clean blue sky that vaults over the earth.
Brahmgyani treats the friend and foe alike,
As he is free from self-conceit.
Brahmgyani is the highest of the high,
But he considers himself lowest of the low.
Brahmgyani only that man can become
On whom God showers his kindly grace. * 57

Concept of Truth

“True are thy regions, true Thy universes,
True, the habitations, true Thy forms,
True, Thy works and all ideas,
True, Thy manifested providence, O True Lord.” * 58

In the 'Adi Granth', there is multiple use of the term 'sach'. If at one place, the term stands for God, at another place it implies truthfulness or integrity of character. It also refers to the experience or delight of the poet in the contemplation of the Absolute. The regions of creation are designed 'True', the whole Being or Absolute is truly True, values are true, the Guru is true enlightener for the disciple, the words of the Guru constitute the 'True' speech. In its broad cosmic ramifications, truth is objective reality, both material and transcendental matter, energy and consciousness. So while truth may defy description or definition, no one searching for it could reject phenomenon as illusory or irrelevant without the risk of being misled.

The principal problem of man as spelled out in the very first verse of Japji is, "How can truth be attained and a man become 'Sachiar' ? How can the dividing wall of falsehood be broken." * 59 The rest of the Japji is an attempt to provide an answer to this question. Guru Nanak has constructed his theory of truth in a masterly fashion. To reach the ultimate truth, man passes through various regions or stages of realization which are quite psychological. In his Japji, we find ascending levels of truth, starting with the physical and ending with the spiritual. Passing through the realm of 'Dharamkhand' (the realm of perceptual truth) 'Gyan Khand' (the realm of knowledge) 'Saram Khand' (the realm of artistic vision or creativity), 'Karam Khand' (realm of action or divine grace) the seeker reaches 'Sach Khand' (the realm of divine Truth). * 60

Dharam Khand (the realm of perceptual truth) is the plane of perceptual truth, consisting of common sense world, the physical social environment of man experienced through the senses. Physically, this level of reality is characterized by 'facts' correlated to human awareness of means of sense perception. Ethically, this constitutes the first stage, that of awareness of the day to day empirical world and the operations going on in it. * 61 Here the seeker gets the factual knowledge of the objective world. He acquires the true knowledge of the happenings of this world. In describing this realm, the Guru speaks of the countless species of the biological world and the immense variety of objects perceived.

"Inhabited by numerous kinds of trainings and species,
Bearing various names, forms and qualities." * 62

Ignorance is a spiritual bondage. Human mind does not stop at the sensory level or factual belief. It advances further and enters into the realm of 'Gyan-reflective' vision. The result is the abundance of knowledge. It is the plane of logical truth. What cannot be observed perceptually, may be inferred or constructed logically. This realm of knowledge helps to develop the synthetic power of the mind. It develops reflective imagination. In this realm there is abundance of knowledge – 'Gyan Prachand' – where a seeker can enjoy millions of wonderful sights and sounds which a master of artistic insight can easily shape.

In the domain of knowledge, knowledge abounds,

Myriad kinds of joys, sights sounds. * 63

After Gyan Khand comes Saram Khand, the realm of artistic vision or creativity. This realm is characterized by beauty and its aesthetic experience. The seeker's senses are refined here. The mental and moral qualities of the seeker like 'Surti', 'Mati', 'Mana', 'Budhi', i.e. imagination, reason, feelings and intelligence are formed and he receives the enlightenment which the rishis and the yogis receive. * 64

Here consciousness and intellect are re-fashioned,
Here is the mind illumined afresh,
Here is the reason reconstituted.
And here is gifted the vision of the gods and superman. * 65

After passing through the realm of Saram Khand man comes to 'Karam Khand' which has been variously interpreted as the sphere of action or divine grace. This level of Ethical Truth is characterized by Strength (Jor). This is the domain of action expressed through powers, the powers acquired through reflection and intuitive experience in the earlier realm. The seeker is now endowed with moral strength and true wisdom which is the hall-mark of a valiant spirit. He is blessed with the love and grace of God.

"Here are the heroes, brave and mighty,
Brimming with the thought of the Almighty,
Here are devotees from all lands and climes,
Who rejoice blessed with Truth in their minds." * 66

Ethically, this is the stage of fulfillment, the stage where bliss is the reward of virtue. Meta-physically this is the realm of action which cannot be separated from the human pursuit of truth and hence from moral conduct. * 67

Passing through all these stages, man comes to 'Sach Khand', the realm of Divine Truth or spiritual identification with the Timeless, Transcendent Being, which is the goal, the ultimate end and purpose of Human existence, the final consummation of man's ascent to Truth. Sach Khand constitutes the last stage. The perfect self finds the vastness of knowledge here. He is filled with joy. It may be called a mystic experience in terms of direct intuition. It is an experience of realizing Nirankar (The Absolute). The self has both intuitive knowledge (Vekhe) as well as bliss (Nihal and Vigase). 68

"This realm is the true dwelling place of the Formless one.
In the Domain of Truth
The Formless abides." * 69

The light of truth shatters all illusions. Perfection is attained in union with the perfect one.

For the Gurus, truth and search for it are not just meta-physical fantasies. They are profoundly relevant to the life of flesh and blood. Their meta-physics is a system of ideas with 'Sach' (truth) as its nucleus. Truth is a value of paramount importance. "There is but one religion in the whole world and that is the establishment of truth in life." * 70 Man's salvation lies not only in the intellectual understanding of Truth but in active identification with it, not only in contemplating truth, but in living it. Truth is the highest of all things. But higher still is truthful living. Truth in Guru's philosophy has both a cosmic and a social aspect, a metaphysical as well as ethical connotation.

Concept of Knowledge

Man is inquisitive by nature. He wants to know more and more to solve the mysteries of life. The Sikh Gurus have attached great importance to the acquisition of knowledge by which however they mean divine knowledge. They have used the word 'gian' for knowledge but other terms such as 'sujh', 'bujh', 'chinana', 'Janana', 'sijanana', 'Pahechanana', 'sach', 'sujhna', 'wakhana', 'mut', 'budh', and 'vivek budh' have been used to convey the idea of wisdom or sense of discrimination.

The Gurus regard knowledge as collerium which when applied adds to the vigour and sight of eyes:

"The Guru applieth to the eyes,
The true salve of divine knowledge,
Which illuminateth the heart and
Dispelleth the darkness of ignorance." * 71

In life's bewildering experiences, light alone can remove darkness, wisdom alone can remove ignorance. With the help of knowledge, man is able to discriminate between good and bad, right and wrong. He shuns evil and follows the virtuous path. He is able to fight the evil impulses of his mind with the sword of knowledge:

"Man's desires subside in his mind
When he fights against them,
With the sword of wisdom." * 72

Some who are called 'empiricists' emphasize the role of sense experience in obtaining knowledge. For them knowledge begins with sense experience. In support of their view, they quote the example of Miss Hallen Keller. Others, who are known as 'rationalists'

opine one could not rely upon sense experience for obtaining knowledge of reality. They say that human reason is the source of knowledge. Aristotle says that the senses furnish us mere potential knowledge, reason actualizes it. Kant says that all knowledge begins with sense experience but our minds impose forms upon the sense experience. * 73

For the idealist ultimate Reality exists beyond man's immediate sensory comprehension. He stresses the importance of the human mind in trying to comprehend the great, all encompassing reality of the universe. Truth comes to man through various ways. Some plain and simple truths by direct experience, perhaps more complicated truths through rational processes of the mind but ultimately and most importantly through the medium of intuition and insight. * 74

The Gurus have not expounded any systematic theory of knowledge. But an outline of epistemology can be formulated from their writings. Guru Nanak has taken up this question regarding the acquisition of knowledge in 'Japji'. Stanzas from 8th to 16th are significant and vital in this context. He lays down three fold steps for the cultivation of knowledge. The three steps are suniya (hearing) Manne (believing, accepting or reflection) and Ek-Dhyan (concentration, assimilation or synthesis). * 75 Sarvana stands for the study of scriptures under a qualified Guru. Manana means constant reflection upon what has been learnt so that intellectual convictions may be produced in the mind. And lastly Nidhiyasana implies meditation which helps to bring about a direct realization of the unity of all things in God. Shuk Rahas – Upnishad also gives these three steps for the acquisition of knowledge. "Complete knowledge can be attained only when the disciple first listens to the words of the Guru. Next he reflects and meditates on them and lastly he assimilates the truth so gained." * 76

Suniye (hearing) is the first step of acquiring knowledge. The seeker hears about the lives of the persons who have attained self-realization. He hears about the various experiences of the higher consciousness such as those recorded in the Sastras, Smrities and the Vedas. Scriptures are the intuitive experiences of rishis, seers and Gurus about meta-physics reduced to writing. These are the holy words. They are not mere speculations. They give the knowledge of reality. This hearing leads to the expansion of the consciousness and attainment of divine knowledge on the part of the seeker:-

"By hearing the word
Comes truthfulness, contentedness and wisdom,
And purification of bathing in the waters of
Sixty eight holy places is attained by it." * 77

The Gurus lay stress on the hearing and recitation of Shabada or the Holy Word embodied in the 'Granth'. Shabda is considered the best source of knowledge for ordinary people.

"Hearken, in communion with word, its numinous call,
Realization of Reality, Truth, contemplation and wisdom all,
Then, even honour are showered, credit of scholastic mind,
With meditation, deep devout and divine devotion of this kind." * 78

But the mere hearing of knowledge is not sufficient. Knowledge to be properly assimilated must be believed, accepted and reflected upon. Guru Nanak has devoted four stanzas (12, 13, 14, 15) in Japji to 'Manne' (believing, accepting or thinking, reflection and meditation). The term (Manne) is traceable to the Sanskrit word 'manane' meaning the thoughtful, careful, thinking, reflection. * 79 But mostly Sikh' scholars have taken 'manne' for believing and accepting. It is through reflective meditation and assimilation that awareness of mind and intellect are fashioned and sharpened. The seeker is able to realize the true nature of reality and thus avoid the wrong path. Guru Amar Dass refers to this discriminatory power as 'bibek-budhi' (discriminating intellect). *80

"The importance of Mannan is beyond description,
With mannan, the mind and intellect are awakened,
With mannan, the significance of all regions is perceived,
With mannan, the disciple of the Guru is liberated and gets others liberated." * 81

Thus logical reflection and disciplined meditation awakens higher consciousness and wisdom in man and then he is able to perceive true wisdom of entire creation. Guru Nanak says that a man of reflection and assimilation receives great honours. He realizes knowledge and becomes a benefactor of humanity.

The 'Upnishads' have also discussed these steps of knowledge in detail. Sravana is listening to the words or texts as they are uttered by the teacher. It is the system of oral tradition by which India has built up her whole culture through the ages, the system called Guruparampara or sampradaya which Udyotakara in his 'Nyaya-Varttika' defines as the uninterrupted ideal succession of pupils and teachers by which knowledge is conserved and transmitted. *82 Hearing of texts and words uttered by the teacher is to be followed by the process of 'manan' deliberation, reflection on the topic taught, but it results only in an intellectual apprehension of its meaning. Therefore, last stage of learning is called 'Nididhyasana' or meditation by which can be attained the realization of truth, Nididhyasana represents the highest stage of meditation. * 83

According to the idealists, the whole Reality or transcendental truth cannot be grasped with two physical eyes. It is true that truth can be known by man through reason but there are certain other truths – truths that transcend the 'natural' order of the universe which

can only be known through intuition or revelation. The Gurus believe in the power of intuition or insight in gaining true knowledge. Says Guru Arjan:

My eyes have seen the light (of God),
And it has whetted my thirst for Him.
But those eyes are not these, eyes
With which is seen by Lord. * 84

Concept of Values

Value is an intrinsic truth. It is the essential norm. It is the essential norm. It is a measure of all good things in life. It helps man to become more subtle and spiritual. * 85

For the idealist, good life is living in harmony with the universe. The absolute is viewed as the final and most ethical of all things and persons. God being perfect is regarded perfect in morals. The idealist's epitome of ethical conduct and morality lies in the imitation of Absolute Self. Man is most moral when his behavior is in accord with the ideal and universal Moral Law. It is indeed a lofty ideal of morality that suggests that we do right simply to be more perfectly in tune with the Universe. * 86

'Sikhism holds that the values are objective in the sense that the self has to discover them. It conceives them as inalienably subjective qualities of Ideal Entity or self in which all of them are grounded. The very notion of development (the concept of Khandas) points to the fact that the self has to discover the values. The ideal self is called Purukh which is the supreme Entity in which all the values are conserved. * 87

For the idealists there are eternal values like truth, beauty and goodness and their cultivation in life makes life fruitful and worth living. The Gurus, being great moral and spiritual teachers, emphasize the cultivation of these higher values in life. The promotion of intellectual, aesthetic, moral and spiritual values in human life is the dominant theme running through the pages of the Adi Granth. "There can be no devotion without cultivation of higher values in life." * 88 says Guru Nanak. For the Gurus, divine knowledge can be obtained through the practical evolution of higher values alone. * 89 And these virtues like our friends help us to overcome vices:

"Nanak, as many are the vices,
So many are the chains round our neck,
Yea, one removeth vice with virtue
For the virtue is our only friend." * 90

In Sikhism, great emphasis is laid on the need to overcome evil impulses and vices like Kam, (concupiscence) Karodh (anger), Lobh (covetousness), Moh (attachment) and

Ahnkar (pride). These passions and vices are to be sublimated by virtues. To overcome vices, cultivation of higher values in life is essential. The Gurus emphasize practical life. Truth is high but higher still is truthful living." *91 There can be no worship without good actions. For a spiritual discipline, the code of conduct is a necessity. Unless the virtues are imbibed, the seeker cannot move further on the spiritual plane.

"He instructs others but practices not himself,
He knows not the quintessence of the word. * 92

The Gurus regard virtues as qualities essential to endear the self to the Divine. It is as Guru Nanak says "Charming one's love with the charm of virtues." Immoral conduct can never be a feature of spiritual progress. The three cardinal values of Guru Nanak's religion are 'Kirat Karna' (to earn one's living by honest labour), Vandah Chakana (to share one's earnings with the poor), and Nam Japna (to meditate on the name of God). And it is with the help of these three values that socialistic pattern of society can be established. Besides these the Gurus have emphasized the cultivation of following cardinal values to be cultivated for a disciplined life.

1. Sat, Santokh Vichar (Truth, contentment and reflection)
2. Daya, Dharam, Dan (Compassion, righteousness and charity)
3. Sidak, Sabar, Sanjam (faith, tolerance and restraint)
4. Khima, Garibi, Seva (forgiveness, humility and service)
5. Bhau, Gyan, Kirt (love, knowledge and work), * 93

These ideas of the Gurus provide a base to their educational thinking. In the pages that follow we find a close relationship between their general philosophy and educational ideas.

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CHAPTER IV CONCEPT OF EDUCATION

From times immemorial India has been a land of spiritual consciousness. For ancient Indian educationists, education enabled a student to realize his spiritual nature. "Arise, awake and stop not till the goal is reached" is the essence of Upanishads. In the light of Ish Upanishad 'Education helps in salvation' * 1 Education was not regarded as an end in itself but only as a means to an end viz the attainment of Brahma Varchasa i.e sacred knowledge or knowledge of the Absolute. This is pointed out in numerous passages of the Vedic literature. 'Sa Vidya Ya Vimuktaye' --- "Education is that which liberates is a well known Indian saying. Some of the prominent modern Indian educationists also uphold this view. Vivekanand believes that all souls are potentially divine and education should be the manifestation of the perfection already in man. *2 Tagore, Gandhi and Aurobindo want that society and education should provide the conditions for all men to travel towards divine perfection. The guiding principle of their educational thought is the awakening of man as a spiritual being. The education of their concept helps in the realization of the human soul, the self in all its powers and potentialities. * 3

1. Education as Self-realization

The Gurus were great spiritual teachers. Their concept of education is rooted in the Indian tradition. In the Gurus' concept of education we find the same noble ideal. Education helps in self-realization and self-manifestation. One who realizes oneself is a truly educated man:

"Who is a man of wisdom ?
Says Nanak, He who realizes his own self
And understandeth God. * 4

"He alone is learned and educated
Who gains self-knowledge through Self-enlightenment." * 5

True education enables a man to attune himself to God. It aims to enlighten his mind with divine knowledge and realize himself. The Gurus have emphasized this idea again and again:

"An educated man, a scholar or a seer is one
Who puts the garland of Ram Nam round his neck." * 6

"He alone is truly educated, wise and learned,
Who practiseth the name of God." * 7

The Gurus decry that education which stimulates the mind without giving inner satisfaction. True education helps in spiritual experience. "What use is that education," says Guru Nanak, "which does not help us to get out of our animal existence and which does not awaken the spiritual depths in man, but, on the other hand, sharpens his intellect to become clever, selfish, sly or wicked." * 8

2. Book learning is not Synonymous with Education

For the Gurus, education is not synonymous with book-learning. They differentiate education from mere information. One may read and read innumerable books and still may not be a rightly educated person. Reading heaps of books without realization and understanding the knowledge gained is useless. It is just a burden on the mind.

"Talking of one's knowledge
And mere reading of scriptures is a load on the mind." * 9

One Pandit Dharam Dass, a profound scholar of Sanskrit literature, who often carried cart-loads of books with him to display his learning came to Guru Nanak for scholarly discussions. Guru Nanak explained to him that a mere store of information or knowledge did not constitute real education. The ability to use what we learn is a fundamental aim of intellectual education.

"We may read and read books
And fill carts with their load
We may read and read books
And store caravans upon caravans with their load,
We may read and read books
And stuff boats and cellars with their load,
We may read and read books,
Through all the years and months at our command,
We may read and read books,
Throughout the life and for all the breath allotted to us;
Yet, says Guru Nanak,
All our education will be a mere prattle of ego,
Unless we realize the philosophy of unity of Godhead
To make our destiny divine." * 10

The Gurus have made a subtle distinction between a scholar and an educated person. A scholar is an ignorant fool if he falls a prey to greed, avarice and arrogance.

Ravana's example is quoted in Gurbani to illustrate this distinction between education and scholarship. He was a great Pandit and had mastered all the shastras and Vedas and yet he could not control his lust for revenge and sex. The animal, the Manmukh in him took the better of him. The Guru says that the real test of one's being educated lies in the use he makes of Vichar-Viveka *11 i.e. contemplative discriminating power.

"There is no dearth of educated men in the world,
But rare is the wise man, who makes use of the knowledge gained.
There is no dearth of learned scholars in the world,
But rare is the man of wisdom who reflects on wisdom." * 12

3. Education as Unfolding of Potentialities

Man is endowed with great potentialities and capacities. Modern educationists regard education as the development of inborn powers. "True education" said Rousseau, "is something that happens from within the individual. It is unfolding of his own latent powers." * 13 In this process of development, the child is helped and guided by the teacher. Education is considered a bi-polar, a designed and deliberate process of direction intended on the part of the teacher to influence personal growth and learning of the pupil. "Education is the process whereby persons intentionally guide the development of persons." * 14

the Gurus believe that man is blessed with unlimited powers. Education is the process of making this inner outer with the help of the Guru. "In the mine of the human soul there are so many gems and jewels of faculties waiting for development only if one cares to listen to the voice of the teacher." * 15

"The body is the temple of God
In it are revealed precious pearls of knowledge." * 16

But these 'precious pearls of knowledge' can be discovered with the help of the teacher. Thus the Gurus believe that education is the development of latent faculties of the child with the help of the teacher. It makes their education a bi-polar process.

4. Education as Illumination

From the Vedic age downwards, the central concept of education of the Indians has been that it is a source of illumination giving a correct lead in the various spheres of life. "Knowledge is the third eye of man which gives him insight into all the affairs of life and teaches him to act wisely. * 17 "Nothing gives us such an unfailing insight as education", says the Mahabharata. * 18

ignorance is the real bondage. Education is defined as the lifting of minds out of the blind alleys by the Gurus. It provides intellectual food, "The mind of him, who is uninstructed remaineth in blind ignorance." * 19 On the other hand, "The treasure of education makes one a learned scholar, liberal and a benefactor of humanity." * 20 "The Gurus regard knowledge as collyrium which when applied lends vigour and better sight to eyes and dispels darkness," says the fifth Guru:

"The Guru has given me the eye salve of divine knowledge
By which the darkness of ignorance is dispelled." * 21

The Gurus consider education as a dynamic force in the life of an individual influencing his physical, mental, emotional, social, ethical and spiritual development. In this "Japji", Guru Nanak has described five stages of mental and spiritual development of the individual. These educational stages mark the development of scientific outlook, artistic vision, creative attitude, moral and spiritual strength and help realize the Divine Truth. These stages show that education is successively information, knowledge, wisdom and truth or practical realization of God's vision and Reality.

"Inhabited by numerous kinds of beings and species
Bearing various names, forms and qualities."

"In the domain of knowledge, knowledge abounds
Myriad kinds of joy, sights, sounds."

"Here consciousness and intellect are refashioned
Here is the mind illumined afresh
Here is the reason reconstituted
And here is gifted the vision of gods and supermen."

"Here are the heroes brave and mighty
Brimming with the thought of the almighty,
Here are devotees from all, lands and climes,
Who rejoice blessed with Truth in their minds."

"In the domain of Truth
The Formless abides." * 22

To sum up, education is regarded as a source of illumination and power by the Gurus. It transforms and ennobles man's nature by the progressive and harmonious development of his physical, mental, intellectual and spiritual powers. It enables him further to live as a sensible and useful citizen of society. It prepares him for complete living.

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CHAPTER V AIMS OF EDUCATION

The Gurus, as we have seen prize human excellence. They find the highest good of man in willing acceptance of duty, in strenuous honest labour, in nobility of heart and mind, in mental illumination, in earnest and constant longing for truth, in appreciation and development of higher values of life, in spiritual and moral perfection. These ideals of human life are reflected in their aims and objectives of education.

The aims of education of the Gurus can be broadly discussed under the following headings:

1. Individual Development
2. Social Development
3. Preparation for a Life of Action

1. INDIVIDUAL DEVELOPMENT

The Gurus want education to prepare man for 'Mukti' (Salvation), 'Jugti' (Art of Life), 'Tripti' (Satisfaction of life or self-fulfilment) and 'Bhukti' (Joy of life or bliss of life). They want man to live happily in this world and earn heavenly bliss hereafter. For the Gurus human life is very important and one should make the best use of it by developing it fully. The various aspects of human personality which they want to develop can be enumerated like this:

(A) Spiritual Development

Idealism believes that there is – divine spark in man. The aim of education is to awaken the Divine that slumbers in man. According to Froebel, "All creatures have one function only to express the spiritual, the Divine that slumbers in them. The aim of education accordingly consists solely in so treating man as to awaken in him his spiritual nature." * 1 For the idealists the aim of education is the eternal process of superior adjustment of the physically and mentally developed, free, conscious human being to God as manifested in the intellectual, emotional and volitional environment of man. * 2

The Gurus are great idealists. They have used the word education in the sense of spiritual enlightenment. For them real education consists in God-realization or self-realization. Guru Gobind Singh asks the seeker to instruct himself in the wisdom of the soul.

"Instruct thyself in the wisdom of the soul,
And let disciplined life be thy distinctive coat,
And utter, unuttered, the mystery that is God." 3

He expects the real educated person to attune himself to the Feet of the Lord.

"O Life, attune thyself to the Feet of the Supreme Being,
Why be asleep, intoxicated by attachment,
Awake, O thou, arise and see,
You, instruct others, but learn not wisdom yourself." * 4

The Gurus enumerate the characteristics of a spiritually enlightened, educated man in detail and call him Brahm Gyani or Gurmukh. Guru Arjan Dev describes in Sukhmani, the character, personality and spiritual powers of Brahm Gyani. According to him a Brahm Gyani is one who has attained perfect knowledge and experience of God. He is a fully God-illuminated soul who ever lives in the highest spiritual state. He is nourished by divine knowledge. He lives like a lotus in the world. He believes in the brother-hood of man and father-hood of God. There is constant urge in him for goodness. His deeds are godly. There is peace and contentment in his life.

"He is one with the Formless One,
He works for the welfare of humanity,
He showers compassion on all men,
He can do no evil act,
He regards all men equal,
Noble and pure are the paths of his life,
He is nourished by divine knowledge,
He knows God and contemplates none but God." * 5

The Gurus think that the attainment of divine knowledge helps in self-realization. Knowledge removes ignorance and enlightens the mind and one is able to see the reality. Guru Gobind Singh expresses this idea in these words:-

"Glory to noble souls,
Who on their earthly way,
Carry upon their lips,
The name of the Lord
Divine knowledge
Is the light of their minds,
And with the broom of wisdom,
They sweep away the dirt of cowardice." * 6

And says Guru Amar Dass:-

"He alone is an educated person, a seer or a scholar,

Who searches his self within,
And gathering the quintessence of knowledge,
Attains deliverance." * 7

Knowledge should help in self-realization. The Gurus do not approve of the scholars who gain knowledge for fruitless discussions but do not realize the actual aim of life:-

"The scholars study more and more to gain knowledge,
But they use it for vain discussions,
They do not use education
For the realization of divine substance which is in them." * 8

(B) Intellectual Development

The Gurus attach great importance to the cultivation of the intellect which is one of the most important factors in developing a fully integrated personality. Education should provide intellectual food and nourishment. For the Gurus constant curiosity and alertness of the mind and emancipation of the intellect from inertia and dead habits should constitute a real element in the intellectual make-up of an individual.

The Gurus looked for the riddance of the Hindu mind from ignorance and superstition. To achieve this aim, they have stressed the acquisition of knowledge for mental development.

"Of all the elements, the most significant is the element of knowledge." * 9

The Gurus consider education essential for the enlightenment of mind and soul. It is avidya (ignorance) which forges fetters to bind the mind. Education enlightens the mind with the light of knowledge. As with the appearance of the sun, the moon disappears, so with the attainment of knowledge, ignorance is dispelled. * 10 The lamp of wisdom burns steadily when it is fed by the oil of the essence of knowledge. * 11 Just as darkness disappears when the lamp is lightened, similarly through the study of the books of wisdom, ignorance of our mind is removed. It becomes clean and does not get dirty again.

"One can clean the mind with the jewel of wisdom,
And thereafter it is soiled not again." * 12

With the help of knowledge man is able to discriminate between good and bad, right and wrong. He shuns evil and follows the virtuous path. He is able to fight against the evil impulses of his mind with the sword of wisdom:

"Man's desires subside in his mind
When he fights against them
With the sword of wisdom." * 13

(C) Character Training and Moral Development

The Gurus are great moral teachers. For them, truth is high but higher still is truthful living. Pursuit of virtues eliminates vices.

"Nanak, as many are the vices
So many are the chains round our neck,
Yea, One removeth vice with virtue,
For virtue is our only friend." * 14

The Gurus hold that true education refines and strengthens our moral fiber and thus prevents us from being affected by the way-ward fleeting passions and prejudices. It is better to be an unlearned saint than to be a wicked, haughty, selfish and self-willed scholar. It is better to be an ignorant virtuous man than to be a learned sinner:

"A scholar sinner will not be spared,
An unlettered saint will not be snared,
A man will by his actions and deeds,
Be judged and known good and bad to be
Play not the game of life in such a way,
That in his presence you may find no place,
The scholar as well as the unlettered soul,
By their deeds will be judged in His court,
The self-willed and the pretentious will suffer agonizing blows." * 15

According to the Gurus, the mark of an educated man is that he tries to inculcate the higher values of life himself.

"He alone is a wise man
Who gains practical enlightenment of life,
Through meditation over the divine values." * 16

A person may read a large number of books and acquire degrees but he will not be considered an educated person if he suffers from selfishness, greed and ego.

"An educated person is a fool,
If he indulges in ego, greed and lust." * 17

In Japji, Guru Nanak explains how one's personality can be developed through moral discipline:

"In the forge of continence
Let patience be the goldsmith,
On the anvil of understanding,
Let him strike with the hammer of knowledge,
Let the fear of God be the bellows,
Let austerities be the fire,
Let the love of God be the crucible,
Let the nectar of life be melted in it." * 18

The Gurus lay great emphasis on the need to overcome evil impulses and vices like 'Kam' (Concupiscence), 'Karodh' (anger), 'Lobh' (Covetousness), 'Moh' (attachment), 'Ahnkar' (pride). These passions are to be sublimated by virtues as the springs of action rather than any physical torture or recourse to asceticism. How these vices can be sublimated is indicated below:

"Let divine wisdom be thy Guru and enlighten your soul,
As with ashes, smear thy body with the love of God,
Eat little, sleep little, be compassionate and forgiving
Be calm and contented,
Then will you pass beyond the three states,
Hold not close in your heart,
Lust, anger, greed, obstinate self-hood,
Or love of worldly things,
Then shall thou behold that which is real,
And attain the one Lord." * 19

(D) Cultural Emotional and Aesthetic Development.

The Gurus are alive to the education and enrichment of emotions. For cultural, emotional and aesthetic development they emphasize the traditional study of music and literature. They emphasize the singing of God's praises accompanied with music. Music is the soul of life and it is the soul of Sikh religion. This tradition of singing God's praises is still found in Gurdwaras as in old temples.

Most of the Gurus were great poets and their poetry has a musical basis. It abounds in poetical graces, lyrical beauties and epic sublimities. The Gurus kept bards as their accompanists. Mardana was the life long companion of Guru Nanak. In the same way Satta and Balwanda carried on the tradition of Mardana and filled the air of the village of Khadur with Guru's sacred music. Guru Hargobind engaged minstrel Abdullah by name to entertain his Sikhs

with martial songs which inspired them with love of heroic deeds. * 20 Guru Gobind Singh got translated the Puranic literature of past to give aesthetic and cultural training to his disciples.

For emotional training and aesthetic development, the Gurus laid great stress on the place of music in the education of their followers. Recitation in congregation was considered educative. The musical recitations not only provided aesthetic enjoyment through literary and musical elements but also held before the common people the cherished ideals and traditions of the land. The musical literary gatherings seemed to elevate their character and bring strength and solace to their minds in the sorrows and struggle of their day-to-day life. The Guru asked his disciples to regale their heart with the hymns:

“Ever love the Guru’s hymns,
And regale your heart by reading
And listening to them.” * 21

Guru Hargobind organized sacred musical concerts at night, beside the tank at Amritsar, in order to entertain as well as instruct the people after the dust and heat of a toilsome day and to diffuse culture with the help of art. * 22 Like his predecessors. Guru Gobind Singh also held congregations where the bards sang the Guru’s hymns and heroic deeds of the past heroes. “The Mahabharat was one of the favourite books of Guru Gobind Singh who himself translated Bhagwat Gita in Punjabi. A learned Brahman would give recitations from it in his Darbar. The readers’ musical voice and his lucid commentary attracted large gatherings and the study of stirring times captivated the heart and imagination of the masses.” * 23

This is how the Gurus achieved the aim of aesthetic and emotional training of their pupils.

(E) Physical Development

“Sport and play are the mind’s amusement, * 24 says Guru Nanak. Education of the body is the most important factor in the education of individual. The Gurus were fully conscious of its importance. They upheld the dignity of labour and a life of action for physical fitness. Guru Nanak himself spent several years of his life at Kartarpur as a practical farmer. He made social activity and manual labour, the key to highest wisdom and spiritual exaltation. One of the criteria of selecting Angad was that he was not shy of physical labour.

In Sidh-gosht, Guru Nanak admonishes the ‘Sidhas’ not to torture and starve their bodies in the hope of winning salvation. ‘Body is the vehicle of Soul’, so it must be kept in a fit, strong and healthy condition. It is the basis of the performance of various worldly duties and hence must be kept in perfect order.

Guru Angad, also, emphasized the physical fitness of his followers which afterwards culminated in the martial development of the Sikhs. He emphasized the physical development of children and maintained a school for them known as 'Mal-Akhara.' This school still exists in Khandur Sahib. He played with children. In order to improve the physique of his pupils, he organized wrestling bouts. * 25

Guru Arjan paid fullest attention to the development of the physical aspect of his Sikhs. Guru Hargobind was well-educated in the skill of arms and would practice martial exercises like sword-play, archery and musketry. He used to devote his spare time to wrestling, riding, tent-pegging and hunting and encouraged these activities among his Sikhs.

"Guru Hargobind encouraged physical feats of warfare, jumping, wrestling, weight lifting and archery among the Sikhs in order to make them sturdy and strong." * 26

Guru Gobind Singh was a great lover of games and sports. There was a daily round of exercises, sports, swords training at Anandpur Sahib as he was keenly aware of the educational, social and military significance of sports. "According to available evidence, Guru Gobind Singh was an active participant in most of the activities as hunting, horse-riding, gatka, shooting, kabaddi, wrestling etc. He laid emphasis on vigorous activities for maintaining physical fitness as he wanted to prepare tough soldiers." * 27

2. SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT

The Gurus were great humanists. The good of the people was dear to them. Since they believed in the service of man, education of their conception should promote among the young pupils a spirit of service, social sensitiveness, co-operation and sacrifice. About the place of service in life Guru Nanak says:-

"We can get an honourable seat in the court of God,
Only when we practice disinterested service in the world,
And thus win glory, beauty and joy of life." * 28

Now-a-days we are thinking of making social service as a compulsory part of our education. N.S.S. and Youth Welfare activities are a step towards this direction. Guru Nanak declared this aim of education long ago when he said:

"He is really an educated man,
Who does good to others." * 29

For the Gurus service of man is the service of God. Religion and education should inspire man to dedicate his life and genius to the service of humanity. Wisdom, virtues and spirituality are futile if they help only in personal salvation. When the yogis who had long

retired into the Himalayan peaks for personal salvation asked Guru Nanak about the prevailing conditions of the world of men, he ironically replied "When sages who have acquired enlightenment, keep hiding in the mountains, who will save the world and what do you expect the world of men to be?" For Guru Nanak really educated man is one who is not an egoist and individualistic but who sees God in all and works for their upliftment.

"He alone, O Nanak, knows the right way of living, who earns his livelihood with the sweat of his brow and then shares it with his fellow human beings." * 30

For the uplift of the society the Gurus have placed the ideal of social service before their Sikhs. The three cardinal principles of their teachings are 'Kirt Karna' (to earn one's livelihood by the sweat of one's brow), 'Vand Chakana' (to share one's earnings with the needy) and 'Nam Japna' (meditation over the name of God). They not only emphasized monetary contribution for the welfare of society but also manual labour like cleaning the floors, preparing meals, serving water, fanning the congregations. Sewa or voluntary physical labour in the service of community was regarded as the rarest privilege and was sought avidly in its different forms. Even a highly-placed Sikh does not mind doing manual labour for the 'lunger' even now-a-days. The example of Bhai Kanhiya deserves a special mention in this respect. He was assigned the duty of serving water to the thirsty wounded soldiers during war. A cry for water from any parched lips at once brought him to the spot and he poured out a palmful of water from the leather water bag at his back to friends and foes alike. The Sikhs felt annoyed at his mission of mercy even towards the enemies of the Guru. They complained against him to the Guru. Bhai Kanhiya was sent for to explain his conduct. He explained in all humility, "My Lord, I have only acted upon your own exhortations. Have not you inculcated in us the belief that all human beings should be served alike." The Guru was very much pleased with him. He had really grasped the true importance of his teachings and followed them both in letter and spirit. In an open 'Darbar' Guru Ji commended his work and paid him highest compliments for his disinterested service to humanity. He also gave him a casket containing a healing balm to be applied to the wounds of wounded soldiers irrespective of caste and creed. The Gurus taught their disciples the service of humanity through their own personal examples. That is why it had deep effect on them.

Seeing the pitiable plight of the suffering humanity, Guru Nanak could not lead a quiet life at home. In those days when the means of communication were not developed, he travelled on foot for long years to give his message of love and service to the suffering humanity. He cried in anguish to see what man had made of man. The example of Guru Gobind Singh is unique in many ways. He sacrificed his father and four sons for the cause of country and Dharma. When his wife did not see her four sons, she enquired about their whereabouts. The reply, the Guru gave shows what an unparalleled ideal of service and sacrifice the great Guru had.

"What of the four, O Mother,
What of thy four ?
When lives the whole people,
The Khalsa here.
Gone, gone are thy four,
As sacrifice for the lives of
These thousands more-all thy sons,
O Mother, what if thy four are gone.

And he further declares:-

He who serves my people, pleases me.
Nothing else is pleasing to my mind.
Offer gifts to them if you may,
For no one else is worthy to receive them
To serve them bears fruit
Both here and here after.
All other service is of no avail,
My possessions, my body, my mind, my soul,
Are ever at the disposal of my people." * 31

The Gurus believed in the fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. To teach these ideals practically, they started 'Sangat' (Community congregations), 'Pangat' (Community dining). These social congregations helped to develop the bonds of fellow feeling, co-operation and self-sacrifice. 'Lungar' (free community dining) bridges the gulf between the rich and the poor and removes the barriers of caste and creed. "Akbar, the Great, it is said visited Goindwal and was highly pleased to observe the principles of love and service of the Sikhs. He also took his meals in Guru-ka-lungar (the community kitchen of the Guru) which institution especially appealed to him as a medium of human equality." * 32

The Gurus taught ideals of citizenship and democratic way of living to their Sikhs. The first five disciples of Guru Gobind Singh belonged to different castes but they drank 'nectar' from the same bowl. The Gurus were fully convinced of the great importance of brotherhood and fellow-feeling as a characteristic mark of a truly educated person. For the social purpose of education is not merely to enrich ourselves through the fullness of knowledge but also to establish the bond of love and friendship between man and man. Guru Arjan Dev inculcated among the Sikhs the spirit of service and dignity of labour, advocated the contribution of 'daswandh' (Contributing one tenth of one's income for social welfare) and included in the Guru Granth the hymns composed by the saints of the Sudra community with a view to promoting equality and unity and prepared the Sikhs to lay down their lives for great social causes.

The Gurus worked for the upliftment of the down-trodden and women. Guru Nanak called himself the 'lowest of the low'. He preferred to stay with Lalo, a carpenter, declining the invitation of a wealthy, caste-proud Malik Bhago. The Gurus were against social exploitation. They wanted the people to live by their honest labour.

Guru Nanak thought highly of women. He pleaded for a very respectable position and status for them. Undoubtedly he was far ahead of his times in asking men to grant women social equality. The concept of woman as man's help-mate became one of the distinctive features of Sikh community. This was the first step towards the liberation of women from crippling social restraints imposed upon them during the Muslim times.

The aim of the education of the Gurus was to build a new and better social order. To achieve this aim they organized lectures, meetings, conferences, fairs, festivals, recitations and kirtans. Guru Amar Dass fixed three ancient festivals, Diwali, Baisakhi and Maghi, to be celebrated as religious fairs so that the Sikhs might get together from different parts of the country. * 33 It was on the occasion of Baisakhi that Guru Gobind Singh created the Khalsa and taught them to die for the sake of the country.

3. PREPARATION FOR A LIFE OF ACTION AND LABOUR

" Namdeva asks Trilochana,
Remember the Name of the Lord in heart.
Do work with hands and feet.
Attuning yourself to the Lord." * 34

These lines of Kabir embody the philosophy of action and labour of the Gurus. The Gurus stand for a life of action. They believe that man can carve out his destiny through his own efforts. They believe in the philosophy of Karmayoga of Gita. To seek salvation man should adopt Karmayoga. The Karmayogi is the real enlightened person. True wisdom is realized through a life of action.

"Wisdom cannot be sought through prattle,
To describe its essence is also hard,
Those alone can gain wisdom,
Who through God's grace
Lead the very practical life of Karmayoga." * 35

Sikh religion is a religion of action. It does not favour the life of a recluse or an ascetic. The example of Banda Bahadur is well-known. He led the life of an ascetic and penance far away from society. Guru Gobind Singh went to him and explained to him the futility of such a useless life. He advised him not to waste his energy and power but utilize it for

the service of humanity. From Madho Dass Baragi he became Banda Bahadur. From the life of inaction, the Guru brought him into the life of action. The Guru asked him to go to the Punjab, organize the Sikh army and continue struggle against the oppressors. * 36 His last message to Banda seems to be:

"Give me this power O Almighty
From righteous deeds I may never refrain
Fearlessly may I fight all the battles of life,
With confident courage claiming the victory,
May my highest ambition be to sing thy praises
And may thy glory be ingrained in my heart
When this mortal life reaches its end,
May I die fighting with limitless courage
In the battle of Life." * 37

With the martyrdom of Guru Arjan Dev, a new value of action came to be included in the scheme of education of the Sikh Gurus. From now onwards the preparation of brave and valiant soldiers, who in the spirit of selfless fighters could defend their own life and the honour of their community became the aim of their education.

Labour should occupy a respectable place in life. Doing work with one's own hands is the best form of social service. The true path of life is known to those who earn their livelihood with hard labour and part with one tenth of their earnings in the service of the needy. The Gurus speak ill of those religious mendicants who call themselves cultured but go abegging.

"And though proclaimed as a Guru,
Begg from door to door,
Never, O man should one fall at the feet of such a one." * 38

The Gurus were not stay-at-home philosophers. They led a life of creative and constructive action throughout their lives. As T.L. Vaswani states, "Work and worship, love and labour, silence and song were blended together in the life of Kartarpur." * 39

The Gurus had such a faith in dignity of labour and work by all that they themselves worked with their hands. Honest labour according to them activated brain, developed social qualities, made individuals self-dependent and took them near God. While appointing their successors they would invariably give consideration to the love of labour of their followers. Guru Arjan's advice to his disciples is:

"You live your life making earnest efforts
And make your life happy through rightful earnings.

Meet thy Lord through contemplation
And your anxieties will be dispelled." * 40

For the achievement of these purposes of education, the Gurus refer to certain formal and informal studies and activities in their writings – a sort of curriculum in our present day terminology.

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CHAPTER VI

THE CURRICULUM

The term curriculum includes all the learning experiences designed by the school with a view to enable the pupils to achieve the objectives of education. The class room learning and the participation of pupils in various school activities make the school curriculum.

Even certain general experiences, incidental to mere association with large diverse groups of youth, in a school situation, may be considered parts of the total school curriculum. Since these experiences may result in deeper insights into the meanings of democracy or in added skills in human relations. They, too, are learning experiences under the direction of the school. * 1 Viewed in this light formal as well as informal learning experiences of school and outside school form the programme of education.

Under the inspiration and guidance of the Gurus, schools were attached to Gurudwaras. These schools catered to the educational needs of the young and the old. Instruments of mass education, these institutions, as Dr Leitner refers provided for the teaching of Gurmukhi, religious books, like Panch Granthi and Guru Granth Sahib, and elementary arithmetic. * 2 The instructions imparted to the young scholars at the time of Baptismal ceremony also give an idea of the content of education. In them are recommended as essential, the following activities. This is essential:

"The reading of the Japji (of Guru Nanak), of the Japji (of Guru Gobind Singh), of the Rehras (evening prayer), of the Sohila (a prayer before going to sleep), of the Anandji (evening prayer), of the Chandipat, the Gurmantra (the fundamental formula of Japji), Sadh Sangat (association with good men); Dinwar Purub Kerna (celebration of festivals), Katha Kirtan (exposition of hymns), Sikhon da adar kerna (showing respect to the Sikhs), Nitnam Siri Granth Path Kerna (listening to the reading of the Granth Sahib daily), Darshan Kerna (to see the in other words to see, hear and read the Granth), Shastar Vidya sikhna (the study of military science), Chorah Charan sikhna (learn to ride), Sach Bolna (speak the truth), Gurmukhi Vidya sikhna (to learn the Gurmukhi literature) Dharam ki kirt kerna (to earn money righteously), Khairat kerna (to give alms), Mata pita da adar kerna (to honour father and mother)." * 3

From the above instructions by the Gurus it is clear that the education of a Sikh, consists in speaking the truth, learning to ride and get training as soldier, in addition to his main duties, that of worship, reading the sacred books, and studying Gurmukhi literature. They also want their disciples to learn social and civic efficiency and to be able to earn their livelihood by following some suitable professions.

The content of education according to the Gurus should mainly embody the following:-

1. Religious and Moral Education

The Gurus emphasize religious and moral education. God-realization being their Goal of education, their content of education is religious and ethical in character. When Guru Nanak was a child, he was taken to the traditional indigenous school to acquire education. He soon picked up the elementary knowledge and pestered the teacher as his biographies say, for more knowledge. Not satisfied by what the teacher imparted to him, he asked him with great humility and respect, "Sir, what is the scope of your learning ? The school master replied that he had read all the branches of knowledge, the Vedas and the Shastras. He knew arithmetic and book-keeping and had learnt to cast up accounts, post ledgers and day-books and strike balances." But Guru Nanak was not satisfied by this answer and told his teacher that the knowledge imparted by him pertained to the advancement of material objectives which could only lead to the enjoyment of sense organs. And in a passage of great beauty and wisdom, he told him the very secret of education, * 4 saying that he preferred the study of divine knowledge to worldly accomplishments:-

"Burn thy earthly cravings,
Grind their ashes well,
And make thy ink there from,
Let a pure, high mind thy paper be
Make love thy pen and heart thy writer,
Thou writest as the Teacher True
Doeth guide thee,
Write the name of God, write his praises,
Write of the Lord that hath no limit,
End or measure
O friend, learn to cast this account,
So that when and where an account
Is called from thee
Thou mayest win a mark of honour true." * 5

If we analyse the above passage we find that the Guru has asked his followers to develop higher virtues in life and sing the praises of Lord. In the same spirit, the third Guru asks the pandit, the scholar, to communicate religious instruction to the people.

(Sayeth Prehlada)

Write on my tablet only the name of God,

For involved with the others,
I am caught in the noose of death. * 6

And this is exactly what the fifth Guru says:-

"Write thou on the paper with thy pen and ink
Nothing other than the Lord's nectar-name." * 7

The Gurus have emphasized the attainment of divine knowledge. For it is with such knowledge that deliverance is attained. It is with the broom of divine knowledge that filth of timidity can be removed.

"One must seek refuge in patience
And illuminate the mind with the light of knowledge,
And, with the broom of divine wisdom,
Sweep away the filth of timidity." * 8

The 'Pattis' (acrostic tablets) of Guru Nanak and Guru Amar Dass help us know the content of education favoured by the Gurus. These 'Pattis' (acrostic tablets) are beautiful compositions in 'Rag Asa' on the thirty five letters of the alphabet. They explain the meaning that each letter should assume to make knowledge worth acquiring. All along the hymns, the Gurus talk of God, Guru, Karma, good deeds, ego-sublimation, ultimate destiny of man, transmigration of soul and universe. They emphasize that education should be based on right actions, sportsmanship, sense of responsibility, discipline of life and optimism. It should be God-centred. We must reap the fruit of our actions. So education should inculcate a sense of performing one's duties and responsibilities in the most befitting manner so that when an account is called for it is discharged properly:

"O, you foolish egoist, why do you forget God ?
Thou shall be regarded an educated man only,
When you render a successful account of your life's deeds to the Master,
Through proper discharge of your duties and responsibilities.
One, who by the grace of the Guru,
Realizes Him through these letters,
Has no account of render." * 9

Writing about the content of education that the Gurus would favour, McLeod writes that the instructions recorded in the Adi Granth and those delivered by Guru Nanak in gatherings of his disciples at Kartarpur had the same form. The content would, however, be the same. In both cases there would be the same emphasis upon the greatness of God, upon His Gracious Self-revelation, upon the perils of the human condition and upon the paramount

necessity of meditation on the divine name. Trust in conventional external forms would be exposed as essentially futile. Those who placed their confidence in status conferred by caste or wealth would be strongly admonished and one who descended to religious hypocrisy would be roundly condemned." * 10

In the beginning this religious and moral content of education consisted mostly of the hymns composed by the Gurus. These compositions, Japji, Asa-di-war, Rehras and Sohila made up the curriculum. Guru Arjan contributed largely to the evolution of the curriculum. A great poet and a scholar, he compiled 'Granth Sahib'. The study of Guru Granth Sahib became an indispensable part of the education of the Sikhs. This 'Model Book' of the spiritual and temporal instructions became the curriculum itself. Guru after Guru enjoined upon his followers to read the Granth. "Guru may die." said Guru Har Krishan before his death, "but their heart – The Granth Sahib shall remain with you. It contains instructions, divine knowledge, and the Gurus spell. Read it and act upon its counsels." * 11

And we have seen that later on study of Guru Granth Sahib became an integral part of the curriculum of Gurmukhi schools. It was also an important subject of education in the Bungas and Maths established by the Nirmalas.

2. Study of Biographies

The curriculum given by the Gurus was mainly scriptural, devotional and ethical in character. In course of time biography came to be added to this curriculum. Guru Angad is said to have compiled Guru Nanak's life story with the help of Bala, the life companion of Guru Nanak. This biography compiled by Guru Angad formed the first prose work in Punjabi language. "The book soon became a favourite with the followers of Nanak as it contained his teachings as well as reminiscences. It established its position as the sacred book of the Sikhs. The Ramayana and the Mahabharata being inaccessible to them, it became the only source of moral and religious instruction to thousands who never knew a word of Sanskrit." * 12

biography was a very interesting piece of literature produced so far, as it combined truth with fiction, realism with romance and history with biography. Hence such biographical literature gained popularity and further additions were made to it. Meharban, a nephew of Guru Arjan Dev, wrote a Janam Sakhi of Guru Nanak. Bhai Gurdas wrote Warran (verses). Several other Janam Sakhies came to be written and formed the content of education. By the time of tenth Guru, there was a large body of this biographical literature available for reading by the children and adults. Vachitar Natak or the wonderful drama is the autobiography of the tenth Guru containing elements of history and romance. Gyan Parobodha or the "Excellence of Wisdom" is devotional and ethical with incidents and morals drawn from the ancient kings of Mahabharata. Chandi Charitar, the legends of Chandi the Amazonian Goddess and Chandi-ki-war provide rich heroic literature. Apart from its religious or devotional aspect, the biographical literature has literary and popular appeal inspired by the instinct of

hero-worship. Guru Gobind Singh enjoined upon his followers again and again to read history and listen to the recital of the lives of the Gurus. * 13 Janam Sakhies were taught in the Gurmukhi schools attached to the Gurdwaras.

3. Teaching of Mother-tongue

The next subject of curriculum recommended by the Gurus is the study of mother tongue. They made spoken language as the vehicle of their expression. Once Guru Amar Dass was asked by Pandits why he had abandoned Sanskrit, the language of gods, and composed hymns in vulgar tongue. He replied, "Well water can only irritate adjacent land but rain water the whole world. * 14 He meant thereby that mother tongue helps to increase literacy. In the days of the Gurus, illiteracy was widespread. Instead of Sanskrit and Persian, they preferred to impart instruction in Punjabi. It helped them to take education to the doors of the masses. Secondly, they seemed to understand the psychology of the child and wanted that he should get education in his mother tongue. They felt that the learning of one's own language is very important to keep intact one's culture. Their own contribution to the development of Punjabi language is unrivalled. They were true nationalists. At several places they condemned the adoption of foreign culture and language by the people.

- (1) "The Kshatriyas have given up their real Dharma. They have adopted the language (culture) of the ill-intentioned foreign rulers." * 15
- (2) "People have changed their tongue and prefer to be greeted in the Muslim way." * 16

4. Study of Current Languages

The Gurus did not ignore the languages of their times. Guru Nanak studied Sanskrit and went through Vedic literature. He learnt Persian at the feet of one Rukh-ul-Din, which enabled him to become store-keeper later on. Guru Arjan Dev received good education in his childhood not only in Punjabi but in Hindi and Persian also. Guru Gobind Singh was a highly educated man of his age, a versatile genius. He had mastery over Hindi, Sanskrit and Persian. He ran through the whole range of Persian and Sanskrit Epic and historical literature. He had fifty two bards, poets and scholars in his court who produced tremendous literature in current languages. His own contribution to Hindi literature is remarkable. He sent five Nirmalas to study Sanskrit to Banaras who later on taught this language to the Sikhs and translated a huge literature from Sanskrit to Hindi and Punjabi. These Nirmalas were learned scholars steeped in Sanskrit literature and interpreted Sikhism in the light of Vedantic literature. They established various Sanskrit Vidyalas. The Sanskrit vidyalas at Kankhal (Haridwar) and Kashi (Banaras) are doing yeo-man's service even up to this day for propagation of Sanskrit language

and literature. * 17 Thus the example of the Gurus encouraged favourable climate for the learning of several languages.

5.Calligraphy

In those days when there were no facilities for printing, calligraphy was considered a great art and beautiful handwriting was a great asset. This art of writing beautifully must have been taught to the students in the schools attached to the Gurdwaras as hymns of Gurus were transcribed and collected in 'Pothis' or anthologies for personal edification. The fifth Guru compiled the 'Granth Sahib' and might have written it himself with the help of Bhai Gurdas. It is said about Guru Gobind Singh that he wrote the Dasam Granth in his own hand with the help of Bhai Mani Singh. Damdama Sahib and Amritsar became the great centres of this activity where the holy book was produced by copyists with scrupulous care and accuracy. Tradition tells us that Guru Gobind Singh used to have pens scattered in different directions of Damdama Sahib, so that the inhabitants of the place could become good pen men. Copies transcribed at Damdama Sahib were especially prized. Gurmukhi calligraphy of this place was accepted as standard and formed the basis of characters moulding for printing. * 18

this art of calligraphy was also taught in the Bungas and Maths of Nirmala and Udasi sadhus, which were great centres of educational activity. "Singhpurian Bunga trained young apprentices in the art of calligraphy and a few masters of this art remembered to this day were Bhai Lahora Singh and Hari Singh. Sant Singh Giani of Harmandir was himself a calligraphist of note and a great patron of this art. The manuscript copies of the Holy Book or the Granth written by copyists of those days are still found in some libraries like Khalsa College, Amritsar, Sikh History Library and Guru Ram Dass Library, Amritsar, and in possession of scholars like Prof. Ganda Singh and Giani Bishan Singh. * 19

such being the great value and need of the art of calligraphy in those days, the Gurus must have emphasized upon its learning.

6.Study of Arithmetic and Book-Keeping

The instruction in the Gurdwaras schools of Guru Nanak's time dealt with the reading of Gurumukhi tongue, with the merest rudiments of arithmetic. Their primary concern was, however, religious education from which moral guidance was incidental. * 20 The Sikh Gurus had always advocated both by precept and example, the pursuit of some occupation, trade, craft, agriculture, etc. whereby one could earn one's livelihood honestly. The knowledge of arithmetic was indispensable for the pursuit of these occupations. Teaching of arithmetic was traditional and common in all schools particularly attached to the Gurdwaras. The first four Gurus had also learnt it.

During the times of the Gurus, the Hindus had lost political entity. They had taken to shop-keeping, trade and commerce as their first and last resort. Every Hindu boy was taught the art of book-keeping. This khataries and vaishas and there were various schools which catered to this public demand. The Gurus were all Khatries and well-versed in arithmetic and book-keeping. * 21

Guru Arjan Dev encouraged horsetrade. * 22 Arithmetic was an essential equipment of this business. It can be assumed that the most of the Sikhs who were in business knew arithmetic for they had learnt it in Sikh schools. The Gurmukhi schools studied by Dr Leitner had definite provision for the teaching of arithmetic. * 23

7. Manual Labour, Arts and Crafts

The professions of arts and crafts and manual work were given highest respect and made instrument for truly spiritual and virtuous life by the Sikh Gurus. Guru Nanak worked as a farmer at Kartarpur in the last days of his life. Guru Angad performed all sorts of manual jobs for his master. Though old, Guru Amar Dass served Guru Angad with the fullest devotion was selected by Guru Nanak as his successor not only because he had achieved spiritual perfection but also because he could perform the humblest tasks and submit to the most strenuous labour in the service of humanity. The Gurus treated the manual workers with utmost kindness and affection. Guru Nanak's attachment with Bhai Lalo is proverbial.

Guru Ram Dass and Guru Arjan contributed a lot for the development of trade and industry. The building of new cities by the Gurus gave a fillip to the development of trade. Interests of trade and commerce were further served by the foundation by the Gurus of a series of towns and cities – Kartarpur, Anandpur, Amritsar and quite a few others for instance which became centres not only of Sikh worship, prayer and pilgrimage but also of active trade and commerce. * 24

The teachings of the Gurus had a direct bearing on the practical problems of life. All prejudices against honest labour were removed, and the people began to take an active part in the worldly affairs. Henceforth we often hear of horse-dealing, banking, embroidery and carpentry among the Sikhs. The Gurus patronized and encouraged them, as this was also one of the noblest ways of doing service to the country. * 25

From these instances it may be assumed that arts and crafts and dignity of labour would have occupied an important place in the scheme of Gurus educational system.

8. Music and Poetry

"There is dharamsala in every house and kirtan (congregational singing) is going

on constantly" * 26 says Bhai Gurdas. One of the main features of the Sikhs curriculum is its musical bias. It is not formal, prosaic or dry but abounds in poetical graces and lyrical beauties. The Gurus have recognized the great value of music and poetry. In Gurbani, we find the union of music and poetry which leads the singer as well as the listener to bliss. That is why the Gurus have greatly emphasized congregational singing in Gurdwaras. For them kirtan is full of bliss and deep in qualities. Nearly the whole of the Granth is written in verse and composed in ragas. Mardana, the rebock-player was the life-long companion of Guru Nanak. Satta and Balwanda carried on the tradition of Mardana and filled the village of Khadur with Gurus' sacred music. The rest of the Gurus had also bards in their darbars. The Gurus also added to the musical instruments. Guru Nanak introduced a special type of Rabab. Guru Amar Dass a new musical instrument called the "Saranda" * 27 Education in music and musical instruments was also carried on in the 'bungas' and 'maths' established by the Nirmala and Udasi sadhus. * 28 Guru Nanak introduced a special type of rabab.

All the Gurus were religious teachers. The main aim of their education is God-realization. It is a well-known fact that through music the mind loses itself in devotion and bliss and is easily attuned to God. The example of Mira is before us. That is why musical recitations of sacred shabdas form an important part of the curriculum for the Gurus' disciples.

9. Physical Education

The Gurus wanted to build up a community of strong, and sturdy people. They Emphasized the fitness of the body for spiritual as well as for temporal reasons. "Starve, not thy body, it is the vehicle of the soul. Take care of the body that you may meditate upon the Lord and apply to His services", said Guru Nanak to Sheikh Brahm who was doing penance. "Sport and play are the minds amusements, * 29 says the Guru. Tradition tells us that Guru Angad was very keen on physical fitness. He ordered his followers to take part in drill and competitive games after the morning service. Every community centre had a wrestling arena attached to it. He started a tradition which made it easy to raise troops of able bodied men from among the disciples. * 30

With time, the Gurus came to place more and more emphasis on the value of sports and games. Guru Hargobind devoted most of his time to wrestling, riding, tent-pegging and hunting tigers and boars. Physical strength and athletic constitution found as much favour with the war-like pontiff as the highest piety or the deepest learning. * 31 He had great love for sports and military exercises. After daybreak he gave his Sikhs divine instruction and practiced martial exercises. * 32

Guru Gobind Singh was a great patron of sports and games. He was keenly aware of the educational, social and military significance of sports. He himself actively participated in most of the sports like hunting, boating, horse-riding, gataka, shooting, kabaddi and wrestling. Contests in various sports were organized by him and winners were awarded

prizes. * 33 These instance indicate that the Gurus would greatly favour games and sports in the scheme of child's education.

10. Training in Arms

The death of Guru Arjan was a turning point in the history of the Punjab. The nation was groaning under the tyranny and oppression of the Mughals. In self-defence, the Sikhs took to arms. Guru Arjan, in his last message to his son and successor Hargobind asked him to sit fully armed on his throne and maintain an army to the best of his ability. * 34 Visualising the need of the time he had already given military training to Hargobind and other boys of his age. He had employed highly skilled and accomplished warriors to build the nucleus of Hargobind's army. * 35 The young Hargobind took the seat of his father with two swords girded round his waist, one to symbolize spiritual power and the other temporal. He was well-educated in the use of arms. He trained a body of soldiers and spent much of his time in martial exercises like wrestling, riding, hunting, tent-pegging, sword play, archery and musketry. He made it known to his disciples that he would welcome offerings of arms instead of money. In the Gurudwaras instead of chanting hymns of peace, the congregations heard ballads extolling feats of heroism and instead of listening to religious discussions, discussed plans of military actions. * 36

Guru Hargobind made military training compulsory for his disciples and the members of the Guru's house-hold. Baba Gurditta, Guru Har Rai, Guru Teg Bahadur were all trained in the use of arms. After Guru Hargobind, skill in three R's as well as arms become the essential equipment of the education of the Gurus and their disciples. Writing about the military training of Guru Har Rai, Macauliffe writes, "In the afternoon, the Guru used often to gird his sword, equip himself with his bow and arrows, mount his horse and proceed to the chase. He maintained two thousand two hundred mounted soldiers. * 37 During those days when most of the battles were fought by soldiers riding on horses, horsemanship was therefore a must for every body especially for soldiers. Hunting expeditions were organized to give practical training to the disciples.

Guru Teg Bahadur was adept in sword-play. That is why he is known as Teg Bahadur. The tradition of militarism that Guru Hargobind created, Guru Gobind Singh perfected into a permanent legacy to the Punjab by making military training a part and parcel of the religious education of the Sikhs. When Guru Gobind Singh had baptized the first five Sikhs by the ceremonial of the sword, he enjoined upon them saying, "Read the prescribed hymns of the Gurus, meditate on the Creator, do your everyday duty of life as well as practice arms." * 38

The tenth Guru converted the young community of disciples into a semi-military brotherhood with special symbols and sacraments for protecting themselves and others. He

made sword as a part of the uniform of the Sikhs. The hills around Anandpur began to echo to the beating of war drums and military commands. Mock battles between parties of Sikhs were fought. It was due to this training in arms that he was able to wage a war against the Mughals and the hill Rajas. The skill in three R's as well as in the arms became henceforth the essential equipment of the Sikhs. Such was the people's zeal for training in the use of arms that a poet called Heera contemporary of Guru Gobind Singh said in one of his verses that a Sikh boy learnt to wield the sword before he learnt to tie his turban." * 39

11. Study of Literature

Literature was the next means employed by the Gurus to infuse a warlike spirit into the heart of their followers. Guru Gobind Singh had a great love for ancient Indian epic literature. He received ancient Indian classics. The Guru discovered that the revival of the culture of the people was essential for awakening their martial spirit. In his court, the bards sang heroic songs. The finest heroic literature was produced and presented to the people in their own language under his inspiration. The religious lyrics incorporated in the Bani were tuned to heroic measures. He went through the whole range of epic literature in Sanskrit and stored his mind with the soul stirring legends of Mahabharata and Puranas. The Mahabharata was one of the favourite books of Guru Gobind Singh. He himself translated Bhagwat Gita in Punjabi.

"I have cast the Dasm of Bhagat into Hindi with no other desire than only for the love of the holy war." * 40 says Guru Gobind Singh. A learned Brahmin would give recitation from it in his Darbar. The reader's musical voice and his lucid commentary attracted large gatherings and the story of stirring times captivated the hearts and imagination of the masses." * 41 The stories of Rama destroying the Demon king of Lanka, the son of Devki crushing Kansa, and specially the exploits of that personification of righteousness and divine power called Durga, breaking the skulls, and drinking the blood of Mohikasur and other demons, filled his heart with hope and confidence. * 42, that he too would be able to harness the dormant energies of the vanquished people and free them from the clutches of tyranny and oppression. Thus every evening the Sikhs heard ballads exploiting the deeds of warriors who had defied tyranny by the force of arms. A martial atmosphere came to pervade the Sikh court of Anandpur. This heroic song of Guru Gobind was on the lips of everybody:

Grant me this boon, O God,
From thy greatness
May I never refrain
From righteous acts
May I fight without fear,
All foes in life's battle
With confident courage claiming the victory
May my highest ambition be

Singing thy praises
Any may thy glory be
Ingrained in my heart.
When this mortal life
Reaches its limits.
May I die fighting
With limitless courage. * 43

Guru Gobind Singh called upon his disciples to sing God's praises in their mouths but meditate war in their hearts. Thus heroic epic literature steeped in Indian traditions for national awakening formed another element of the educational system of the Gurus.

12 Study of History

Guru Gobind Singh was interested in the glorious past of India. He inspired his Sikhs to study ancient Indian history for national awakening. He was particularly interested in history for its educational and philosophical values. He asked the Sikhs to read their history from the time of Guru Nanak. * 44 Huge biographical literature produced in those times is nothing but the history of the Gurus in a story form. Obviously the Gurus wanted their disciples to study Indian history as part of their educational equipment. Says the third Guru:

"The stories of the great elders
Their worthy sons repeat
And out of these accept what is pleasing to the Guru
And do the like deeds." * 45

13 Study of Politics

The Sikh Gurus came into contact and conflict with the political order of their times. They suffered at the hands of unjust and cruel kings. This led them to give thought to the political system that the people would need for a better social, economic life and moral regeneration and fight for it.

Guru Gobind Singh had great political insight. His 'Khalsa' was a democratic organization with faith in principles of equality, liberty and fraternity. "He was the first Indian leader who taught democratic principles and made his followers regard each other as Bhai or brother and act by Gurmata or general counsels." * 46 He gave a practical demonstration of democratic living by being himself the disciple of five elected ones. He believed in self-government and attached great importance to 'Panches'. He organized the Sikh community in Anandpur on democratic basis. The Gurus fought against the political tyranny of the Mughals

by organizing the Sikhs into a well-knit community. The informal study of politics must have enabled them to awaken the spirit of unity and self-defence among their disciples.

14 Informal Programmes

The Gurus and their Sikhs began their daily work with meditation early in the morning in the Gurdwaras. After meditation there was a musical recitation of Shabadas, katha, discussion and prayer and then they dispersed for the days labour. In the evening they again assembled in the Gurdwaras. There was musical singing of Gurbani, katha, discussion and prayer. Individual instruction was imparted to those who sought it. Through this daily routine of disciplined life, the disciples learnt a life of action, service, exchange of ideas and corporate living.

The tenth Guru had a fascinating way of imparting education in an informal way. The Guru came to the morning assembly where he listened to the sacred hymns being sung to the accompaniment of musical instruments. He gave expositions of the scriptural texts for the edification of the audience. The rest of the day was spent in the study of books on religion and mythology, recitations of heroic poetry, weapon training, drills, athletic competitions and light and informal conversation with the Sikhs and in meeting their questions or doubts and ministering to their needs and problems arising from corporate living on such a vast scale. Then there was evening assembly followed by common board and concourses far into the night at which the news of the Government excesses was discussed and stories were narrated of the preceding Gurus and the Sikhs of their times. * 47 This daily routine of the Guru was of great educational significance.

In the schools attached to the dharamsalas, students were taught to take part in the activities of the community kitchens and social service. On the occasion of the celebration of festival and the sacred days, the students were invited to participate in them. They delivered short speeches, recitations and singing of the Shabadas. Their efforts were appreciated and at time participants were given prizes for their performances. This participation must have trained them in public speaking. The practice is in vogue in the gurdwaras even now. Through various corporate activities, the Gurus tried to teach their disciples the qualities of equality, fraternity and service. In the dharamsalas sweeping floors, cleansing of utensils, fetching of water, preparation of bread were meant to teach the art of social service. Guru-ka-langar (the community kitchen) removed the barriers of caste and creed. Service of mankind was given an important place in their scheme of education. Through service the disciple and the Guru became one. Bhai Kanhiya offered a red-cross type of service in the battle of Anandpur and rose high in the esteem of the Guru. These co-curricular activities training the disciple in the art of social service formed an integral part of the scheme of education of the Sikh Gurus.

CONCLUSION

If we analyse the contents of learning suggested by the various Gurus, we find a gradual development in their scheme of education. We find that with the lapse of time, elementary schools based on Guru Nanak's teachings came to have a wider programme. Guru Hargobind, the sixth Guru was trained in the use of various languages, offensive and defensive weapons, riding, swimming, agriculture, administration and other sciences by Bhai Budha the family teacher. * 48

In the time of Guru Gobind Singh, this curriculum became wider, when seats of learning were established at Anandpur Sahib and Damdama Sahib. The curriculum came to include teaching of Sanskrit, Punjabi, Literature, Philosophy, Politics, Astronomy, Mathematics, Literary Criticism etc. Guru Gobind Singh, himself a great scholar, poet and educationist gave a great stimulus and patronage to this literary drive. This curriculum may not be very comprehensive viewed in the modern light but it was extensive enough in those times to meet the needs of those days.

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CHAPTER VII METHODS OF EDUCATION

But the Gurus were neither class-room teachers in the present sense of the term nor did they have specially designed and arranged classes to teach. They had a large following – a mass of people who would come to see them and receive blessings, a word of advice or instruction from them or they themselves would move from place to place to convey their message to them. As such Guru's methods of teaching others were more of informal, traditional and indirect nature than being formal, though the Gurus were very clear and formal about what they wanted to impart to their followers. They developed such effective ways of educating the people around them that we cannot help but take a careful note of them.

A – EDUCATION OF ADULTS

1. Kirtan

The Gurus clearly realized the importance of music, traditionally recognized in India as an inseparable part of worshipful life. They would themselves sing their own poetic compositions and would ask their disciples to sing them too. Accompanied by instruments the songs sung in the praise of God and relating to the role of man as they were, had a marked impact upon the listeners.

With time there came to be a class of men specially trained to sing 'Shabadas' (Portions of Guru's composition) in religious and semi-religious congregations. These devout with the sweetness of their voice have all through been a powerful agent of effectively driving home to the masses Guru's sacred words.

The Gurus changed many a heart with the help of their musical songs. That music helps to refine emotions is a psychological truth. It washes away from the mind the dust of every day life. It purifies the life and helps to link it with God. Musical lines are easy to remember. The Gurus were aware of this immense power of music and made its ample use in educating masses.

The modern methodology of education lays great importance on the creation of suitable environment and motivation for the acquisition of knowledge, skills and abilities. The Gurus did not miss these prerequisites for learning. One could refer to Guru Hargobind's conscious effort to create a mental and emotional environment that aroused and developed the manly qualities of his disciples. With the help of heroic songs, ballads and musical concerts in which minstrel Abdulla sang passionately, the Guru inspired the Sikhs for a life of heroic deeds by dispelling feelings unworthy of brave men. Instead of chanting hymns of peace, the

congregation heard ballads extolling feats of heroism and instead of listening to religious discourses every evening the Sikhs heard ballads extolling the deeds of warriors who had defied tyranny by the force of arms. Guru Gobind Singh was a soldier poet and to instill heroism into the hearts of his people he resang for them the glorious heroic achievements of their war gods and goddesses and of their folk heroes. "A martial atmosphere came to pervade the court at Anandpur. In the court of Guru Gobind Singh, there were bards as well as poets. The former used to sing or recite ballads which aroused the martial spirit of the listeners. It is said that Chandi-di-War came to be recited in 'diwans' or special congregations. Each verse, each line and each syllable of Chandi-charitra breathes fire of life in the dead, inspires the cowardly to love war and infuses new courage in the blood of both the reciters and the listeners." * 1

Guru Gobind Singh, with his associate poets, translated the "Ramayana", the "Mahabharata" and the "Puranas" in easy vernacular. These heroic ballads were sung in his 'darbar' by the bards to arouse martial spirit of the listeners. Dr. Ashta is of the opinion that Bhushan's soul stirring poetry might have been recited in the 'darbar' of Guru Gobind Singh. * 2 Thus martial verse was knowingly sung in the court of the Guru to infuse valour into the hearts and minds of his fellow-soldiers. Such verses as 'Blest is his life in this world who repeats God's name with his mouth and contemplates war in his heart' * 3, must have inspired Guru's disciples into a life of perpetual war against the unjust rule.

2. Katha

" The stories of the great elders
Their worthy sons repeat.
And out of these accept what is pleasing to the Guru.
And do the like deeds." * 4

says the third Guru. To achieve this aim, the Gurus held congregations every morning and evening in the 'dharamsalas' in which they taught their disciples religion, history and social ethics by story method. Biographies came to be written from the times of Guru Angad. Stories from the lives of preceding Gurus and the Sikhs of their times were narrated. * 5 These biographical stories and ballads, apart from their religious and devotional aspect, made a popular appeal and inspired many for a life of courage and action. The stories of the 'upakhyan charitra' with ethical themes provided examples of both good and evil, inspired the listeners to nobler conduct or warned them against the viles of the perverse and the unscrupulous. It appears that the traditional story method as famous in Hitopdesha was used by the Gurus with great advantage.

3. Celebration of Festivals

In keeping with the tradition, the Gurus held congregations, fairs and celebrated

national festivals like Diwali, Baisakhi and Maghi so that the people from different parts of the country might get together. At such gatherings the Gurus would address the people. Not only they organized fairs and festivals for teaching the masses, they also attended the fairs, festivals organized by the people at their holy places. "Baba (Nanak) visited the places of pilgrimage. He went round seeing them all on occasion to educate the masses. Guru Nanak visited Haridwar, Kurukshetra, Jagan Nath Puri at such festive occasions. His encounter with the people at Haridwar is quite well-known.

4. Dramatic Techniques

In order to impress upon their disciples the great lessons of life, the Gurus would dramatize situations. The impact of dramatization was always good.

When encouraged with challenging situation, Guru Nanak created a counter-situation, which provided food for thought. Guru's visit to Multan was resented by the Pirs of Multan who would not want another to add to their already swelling ranks. They filled a cup with milk to the brim and sent it to Guru Nanak to tell him indirectly that there was no place for him. Multan was full with Pirs, another one could not be accommodated. The Guru placed a jasmine flower on the milk. His presence would not be a burden on Multan already full with Pirs. The dramatization of situations in Haridwar and Mecca are too well-known. These dramatic situations are coupled with a sense of humour also.

What a dramatic technique charged with emotion on one Baisakhi Day at Anandpur Sahib did the people witness! Five men one by one came forward for sacrifice in response to the demand of Guru Gobind Singh. What a regret for those who feared death even for a noble cause ! And what an indescribable joy for those who willingly volunteered to die at the bidding of the Guru ! How an enraged group of the followers demanding punishment for Bhai Kanhiya who had served water to the wounded – both Hindus and Muslims was pacified and made to respect Bhai Kanhiya for his service to all the needy shows how the Gurus like practical psychologists would educate people indirectly without the usual coercion exercised by teachers.

5. Regard for Individual Differences

The Gurus came down to the mental level of the people. They taught the masses in a simple way in their own language and took practical illustrations from their life situations. Their first hand experience of the life of the masses, their hopes and fears, their aspirations and ideals and their successes and failures made them understand the disciples and help them accordingly. But when they had to deal with the Pandits, the scholars, they would argue with them on a much higher level. We read of many instances of Gurus having thought-provoking dialogues, discussions and debates with the learned scholars, yogis and Sidhas.

6. Discussion and Debates

The Gurus would not impose their views on others simply because they were held in esteem by them or they were taken by the masses as their spiritual guides. They would indirectly pose a point and involve the people in discussion. By patiently, sweetly and convincingly arguing, they would establish a point. The 'Sidh Goshti' is a beautiful collection of discussions Guru Nanak held with Yogi Sidhas. Bhai Gurdas highlights these encounters when he says, "Guru Nanak met all Sidhas, Nathas and followers of avatars and after discussions made them realize the futility of their doctrines." * 6

McLeod gives many such instances of discussions and debates of Guru Nanak with many a learned scholar. In Banaras, "Guru Nanak held discussion with Chatur Dass, a learned Pandit. A discourse ensued ending with a complete recitation of the lengthy work entitled 'Onkar'" * 7 On another occasion, in the village of Achal Batala, the Guru had a memorable discussion with many Yogis gathered for the annual Shivratri fair. The Guru is said to have defeated them in discussion. * 8 Many disputations must have been held with Nath Yogis, for the members of this sect are addressed directly in several polemical compositions recorded in Guru Granth Sahib. These discussions were a regular feature of the Guru's educational work. In the congregational gatherings, open discussions were held where individual doubts were resolved.

7. Quest and Inquiry

The method of teaching of Gurus is not merely theoretical. They seem to be more modern in their approach as their method of teaching stresses quest and inquiry, a sense of experimentation and dignity of labour.

The Gurus asked their pupils to adopt a spirit of quest and inquiry in learning. Then alone they could gain real education and become creative personalities. They stressed upon them to question the truth of prevailing customs, traditions and practices.

"A person of real research becomes a creative man.
But a talkative one who indulges,
In mere prattle, destroys himself." * 9

The Gurus enkindled a spirit of inquiry among their followers and encouraged them to analyse traditional ideas critically. They emphasized the acceptance of truth only after rational examination. They wanted to develop scientific or rational attitude on the part of their disciples.

8. Activity Methods

Training in arms became an integral part of the Gurus scheme of education from the times of Guru Hargobind. The needs of the time demanded it for self-defence. The Gurus took practical steps to impart training to their disciples in the skill of arms and technique fighting.

The Gurus wanted to build up a community of strong and sturdy people. They made a conscious endeavor in this direction. Guru Angad Dev was very keen on physical fitness of his disciples. He asked them to take part in drill and competitive games after the morning assembly. He organized wrestling bouts and every community centre had a wrestling arena attached to it. * 10 He started a tradition which made it easy to raise troops of able bodied men among the disciples.

Guru Hargobind turned his sole attention to give a martial basis to the Sikh community. He organized various martial exercises like wrestling, riding, archery and hunting expeditions. He welcomed the gifts of arms and horses, gave his Sikhs training in arms and had a standing army at his disposal. * 11

Guru Hargobind watched feats of physical strength such as wrestling bouts and gatka play and supervised lessons in horsemanship and swordmanship. In between he would find time to organize hunting excursions then considered the best mode of imparting war manoeuvres. * 12

His successor, Guru Har Rai was not behind him in this direction. "In the afternoon, he used often to gird his sword, equip himself with his bow and arrows, mount his horse and proceed to the chase. He, maintained two thousand and two hundred mounted soldiers." * 13

Guru Gobind Singh made it a religious duty of his disciples to get training in the skill of arms. He made sword as a part of their uniform. "Martial exercises and sports were resumed with redoubled vigour. Hunting expeditions and competitions in horse racing, musket shooting and archery became a common feature of life at Anandpur. A great part of the day was spent in weapon-training, drills, athletic competitions fond of organizing mock battles." *14 During those days when most of the battles were fought by soldiers riding on horses, horsemanship was a must for everyday especially the warriors. Hunting expeditions were organized to give practical training to the disciples. * 15

Guru Gobind Singh got made a big war drum named 'Ranjit Nagara'. The Sikhs at Anandpur Sahib were trained to observe their daily programme to the beat of this drum. This trained them in regularity and military discipline. The hills around Anandpur began to echo to

the beating of war-drum and military commands. * 16 The Guru welcomed the gifts of weapons and horses and distributed them among his disciples. He raised a large number of army.

Thus the Gurus (especially Guru Harbobind and Guru Gobind Singh) organized martial exercises weapon-training, horse-riding, hunting expeditions, archery, musket-shooting and mock-battles to train their disciples in the skill of arms. By these activity methods, they awakened the dormant energies of vanquished people and made them stout hearted soldiers. This practical training in arms became a permanent feature of the Sikh community after Guru Gobind Singh and produced mighty warriors like Jassa Singh Ahluwalia, Nawab Kapur Singh, Baba Ala Singh, Hari Singh Nalwa, Akali Phula Singh, Sham Singh Attariwala and Maharaja Sher Singh to name but a few. * 17

9. Travelling

In the past, great importance was attached to travelling as a means of education. Rousseau wants Emile to travel when he attains youth so as to gain knowledge of actual life. Travelling is a book which one must read. Although the Gurus have not advocated this method of teaching overtly, yet from their own lives, we can draw the inference that they valued travelling for the purpose of understanding people and places to re-educate them in religious culture. Guru Nanak spent about twenty years of his life in travelling far and wide. "I have seen places of pilgrimage on river banks, the nine religions of the earth, shops, cities, markets." * 18 The other Gurus also took extensive journeys. This must have added to their breadth of knowledge and outlook and provided them opportunities to re-educate masses.

Not only the Gurus themselves took long journeys but also sent their ardent disciples to go out, learn from others and share their own knowledge with them. Bhai Budha, Bhai Gurdas, Bhai Paro, Bhai Lalo, Bhai Banno, Bhai Lalu and Nihalu, Bidhi Chand, Pera Jetha, Pirania, Mati Singh, Bhai Nand Lal, Mani Singh and Santosh Singh and enriched their experiences through travels and dialogues with others.

10. Individual Versus Collective Method of Teaching

According to McLeod, "A second feature of the Kartarpur pattern would have been the regular instruction imparted by the Guru. Such instruction would frequently have been given to individual followers, but the form in which we find it recorded in the Adi Granth will correspond more closely to the instruction delivered in the regular gatherings of his disciples." * 19

Dr. Ahuja resolves the conflict. He is of the opinion that the Guru gave individual instruction to those who sought it and mass instruction to those who gathered round him in the morning and evening congregations. * 20 Thus we find while educating the mass of people, the

Gurus would not ignore the special needs of the individuals. There was quite a close touch between the Gurus and the masses.

11. Love and Sympathy

By far the most important method of education with the Gurus was their love for the disciples. With utmost sympathy, patience and understanding they would drive home their point. Intensely, human, they would treat their followers with kindness. They encouraged the searcher and had compassion for the erring. It was with sweet persuasion, love and sympathy that Guru Nanak reformed Sajjan Thug and Kauda Raksash. The Gurus respected human personality and appealed to the good in man. That is why destructive criticism is not found in them. They asked the Hindus to become good Hindus and the Muslim to become good Muslims.

B – EDUCATION OF CHILDREN

The Sikh Gurus were not concerned about their adult followers all the time. Now and then they made efforts to teach children in the schools attached with dharamsalas. With regard to the teaching of children, we find the Gurus making a judicious use of the methods of teaching in vogue then in the pathshalas meant for children. The basic considerations of love, understanding, sympathy in teaching young ones were never lost sight of.

Contrary to the education of adults, the education of children was more systematic and organized. The following formal methods of teaching were used to teach them.

1. Oral-cum-Memorization Method

In ancient India as well as during medieval times, memorizing as a means of receiving learning was chiefly stressed in the process of learning. "Rote memory was given a large place and the principal aim of the teacher was to pass on to the pupil the traditional learning which he himself had received. Lessons were usually repeated aloud and were recited in a sing song manner. Several boys frequently joined in chorus." * 21

It seems the Gurus adopted the age old methods. The fact that the education of the sixth Guru was according to the traditional method shows that no fresh ground was broken by the Gurus. It is said Bhai Budha wrote the thirty five letters of the Gurmukhi alphabet on a wooden tablet and told Hargobind their names. The pupil immediately repeated them. In a few days he knew how to join vowels with consonants and mastered spelling. He then began to read Guru's hymns upon which his faculty of perception and comprehension was developed. *

22

The child's education commenced with religious instruction which was oral to begin with. Instruction in the first year consisted of learning the arts of writing and reading. The first stage of learning was and is still to this day, the patti or the wooden tablet on which the teacher wrote for the novice, the letters with a kind of liquid chalk. These he repeated loudly and practiced on the tablet daily with the benefit of individual correction. After having committed to memory the letters, the child proceeded to trace letters on the ground covered with sand or dust with his finger or later with a thin piece of wood for a pencil. He would write down and recite it the same time in a sing-song manner each consonant in turn combining with vowel as:

S	mukta	Sa	kanna
Si	siari	Si	bihari
Su	aunkar	Su	dulankar
Se	lawen	Sao	dulawan
So	hora	Sao	kanaura
Sang	tippi	San	bindi * 23

2. Medium of Poetry and Song

This memorization of alphabet was, however, not mechanical. In the modern primers each letter is illustrated by the picture of an object, the name of which begins with that letter. The Gurus introduced a letter with a verse in praise of God or a saint. The "Acrostic" repeated by Guru Nanak is a pretty long poem divided into thirty five couplets dealing with the immortality of God and the mortality of man in a picturesque language.

The child's education began with learning alphabet or painti (thirty five letters) by rote, each letter being accompanied by a motto or oral maxim, which according to Leitner had come down from the time of Guru Angad who is believed to have written the first primer of Gurmukhi. "Guru Angad did not consider it beneath his dignity to write primers for children and he wrote a number of mottos or moral maxims which accompanied the letters of the alphabet e.g.

D-dada	Dos na dije kohu Dos karma apnea (do not attribute your failure to others, attribute it to your own actions)
Kakka--	Kakka kar karte ki puja (worship the Creator)

Papa--	Pap karo mat koe Har ko bhaje, so Hark a hoi (Don't commit any sin, Whoever remembers God will be His (own))
Nanna--	Nana nit waki kar sewa Jaldi tera par ho khewa (Always serve Him, so that your boat may soon reach the shore)
3—Juja--	Juth mat bolna (Tell no lies) Or Jo jo jape so iski gat howe. (rare people associate with saintly men. * 24

But these sayings were not always intelligible to children being beyond their understanding or experience. It was learning by rote.

3. Recitation and Repetition

When the script was mastered on patti or on dusty floor or a layer of sand, the pupil was introduced to Japji. The method was recitation and repetition. The Guru spoke out or read out the verse, line (pankti) after line and the pupil repeated it. At a later stage the pupil was given an assignment. He was asked to read for himself loudly and commit to memory what he had read. The monitor of the class or Guru himself heard as to how far each child had mastered the text. In this revision special attention was paid to pauses, accents and intonation and to spelling and neatness in writing. Silent reading was practiced by the pupil when he was able to do it. At the dispersion of the school, repetition of the day's lesson encouraged great emulation.

Writing and reading went hand in hand. The child acquired efficiency in making a literal acquaintance with his surrounding world. He would learn and write down familiar words like the names of God, Gurus and of things of every day use, eatables, the articles of household, dharamsala etc. The lesson in reading were mainly based on Balbodh or primer.

When children were well advanced in the study of the text, each student would in turn read out the lesson after a model reading was given by the teacher while the teacher would make necessary correction in pronunciation, or intonation and then give the meaning. He would at the same time explain any word or phrase in the text, particularly in poetry, and practice in writing. Special care was taken of pronunciation. Mispronounced words were

corrected and the pupils were given drill in correct pronunciation. The above method of recitation and repetition was adopted for the teaching of music also.

During this whole procedure of teaching, there was a close touch between the teacher and the taught. The number of students being small, individual attention was paid to each and every student. As there was no examination system like the present times, a brilliant student was not hampered in his progress and held back by his slow learning fellow students. He could make progress at his own rate.

4. Monitorial System

An efficient pupil who was quick at learning was styled as monitor. He assisted the teacher in teaching script, giving correction and reading out letters, words and verses. The teacher first and then the monitor led the way in the demonstrative reciting and writing.

5. Story Method

The Gurus through 'katha' educated adults. Biographical stories came to be written from the times of Guru Angad. By the time of the tenth Guru, there was a large body of this biographical literature available for reading by the children and adults. It was a very interesting piece of literature combining history with fiction. Stories from the lives of the preceding Gurus and the Sikhs of their times were narrated to the children. These biographical stories and ballads, apart from their religious and devotional aspect made a popular appeal to children for their story element.

6. Play – Way

Macauliffe gives a portrait of Guru Angad in which he is shown instructing a young lad. He was very fond of children and had an insight into child's nature. Children were fed and instruction was imparted to them by the Guru himself. He used to delight in watching their sports and took the opportunity of pointing out a moral from their behavior. Intuitively he felt the importance of educating children easily not in the formal manner but through their instinctive ways of life. * 25

The son of Guru Hargobind Baba Atal, a soldier, missionary and a saint was, like Guru Angad, fond of playing with children and used, like him again to instruct them informally while playing and talking with them. The two are rare examples of teaching religion and social ethics by play-way. * 26

After the martyrdom of the fifth Guru, the Gurus began to train their children in the use of weapons. How the child Gobind Rai learnt the art of warfare through play way is

described by Dr. Ahuja in these words, "It started with the use of bow and arrows. The children practiced it in the fields nearby and in course of time mastered their use. Then they were trained in the use of sword and dagger which some times took months together." * 27 "The most favourite sport of the child Gobind was to divide his companions into two sections and make mock fights. He was always the leader in such games. His toys were imitation bows and arrows and his greatest pleasure consisted in leading his companions through mock manoeuvres." * 28 This fact is stated by Macauliffe in these words, "While Gobind Rai was at Lakhanpur, his favourite amusement was playing at mimic warfare. Under the tutorship of Magan, he used to form the boys of the town into opposing armies and engage them in sham fights and martial exercises." * 29 The children of the tenth Guru were well-versed in the art of warfare at a small age. They must have learnt this art through play-way at such a small age.

7. The Teacher's Art

When all is said, the fact remains that the Gurus gave great place to the teacher. A good teacher would evolve his own methods suiting his circumstances. The living touch of a good teacher works wonders. The Gurus again and again dwelt upon the qualities of the teacher so that he could make use of all possible opportunities to guide and instruct his pupils properly.

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2. Ibid, P. 34.
3. Guru Gobind Singh, Dasam Granth, P. 570.
4. M 3, Var Ramkali, A.G.P. 951.
5. Harbans Singh, Guru Gobind Singh, P. 36
6. Bhai Gurdas, Var 1, Stanza 25.
7. Bhai Gurdas, Var 26, 21, 29, 10.
8. McLeod, P. 39 Guru Nanak and the Sikh Religion.
9. M 1, Rag Malar, A.G., P. 1255.
10. Bhai Jodh Singh, Guru Nanak as a Teacher, P. 34.
11. Macauliff, Vol. IV, PP. 3, 5, 11, 70, 76, 77, 220.
12. Fauja Singh, Gurbachan Singh Talib, Guru Teg Bahadur, Punjabi University, Patiala, 1975, P. 7.
13. Macauliffe, Vol IV, P. 277
14. Harbans Singh, Guru Gobind Singh, PP. 31, 36, 45.
15. Ahuja, P. 38.
16. Harbans Singh, Guru Gobind Singh Indigenous Education in Punjab until Annexation with Special Reference to the time of the Sikhs (unpublished Rtro, Thesis) p. 31

17. Ibid P. 80.
18. M 1, Rag Gauri, A.G., P. 156.
19. Op. cit. McLeod, P. 230
20. Op. cit. Ahuja, P. 182.
21. F.E. Keay, Education in Anceint and Later Times, Oxford, University Press, 1954, PP. 106, 142
22. Op. cit. Macauliffe, Vol III, P. 50
23. Op. cit. Ahuja, P. 247.
24. Op. cit., Leitner, Part 1, P. 136, Part IV P.6.
25. Op. cit., Macauliffe, Vol II, P. 15
26. Op. cit., Ahuja, P. 199.
27. Op. cit., Ahuja, P. 38.
28. Op. cit., Harbans Singh, Guru Gobind Singh, P. 13.
29. Macauliffe, Vol IV, P. 366.

CHAPTER VIII

THE TEACHER

In any system of education, the teacher is the pivotal factor. No educational edifice can be raised or maintained without the strength and help of the teacher. The impact of the teacher goes far deeper in effect than any educational programme howsoever thoughtfully designed. The Sikh Gurus very rightly realized the importance of the role of the teacher in the development of the personality of the pupil. In fact, the Gurus held that without a teacher one could not think of any spiritual, moral, mental or social development. In the first fundamental of the Sikh religion, it is emphasized that it is through the teacher alone that one can realize God. * 1

1. His Personality

The Gurus frequently refer to the hard discipline of mind and body through which the teacher should go and the qualities he should strenuously try to cultivate to become an ideal teacher. The Gurus' concept of the teacher is rooted in Indian traditions. In the Rigveda, the term Guru signifies the weighty and mighty. The Guru is a weighty and mighty personality. He is the embodiment of wisdom. He is the means to ultimate knowledge which is identical with Ultimate Being. * 2 The Gurus believe that the teacher liberates himself as also others. He who has realized the true Lord, is the True Guru. * 3 .The ennobling touch of the living personality transforms the lives of the pupils. Guru Arjan says:-

"The Guru has a holy presence,
Seeing which one becomes pure,
Touching his feet one's life becomes holy,
If one meets with him, one recites the praises of the Lord,
And reaches his true court,
Hearing his words, one's ears are satiated.
The mind is at peace and the soul is sated.
Such is the True Guru whose instruction is eternally true.
In his ambrosial sight, one becomes saint,
His virtues are limitless, Him who can evaluate ?
Nanak, he, on whom is his pleasure,
Him he unites with the Lord." * 4

Example is more important than instruction. A teacher teaches through his personality. His presence communicates truth, purity, joy and happiness. The personality of such a teacher can be very well described in the words of Shri Aurobindo, "The greatest master

is much less a teacher than a presence pouring the divine consciousness and its constituting light and power and purity and bliss into all who are receptive around him." * 5

The first quality of a good teacher and most necessary of all is that he must know the subject. He must know what he teaches. He should be a seeker after truth, a constant student.* 6. According to the Sikh Gurus the real aim of the Guru is to awaken divine consciousness in the pupil. Self – realization being the aim of education he is to lead the pupil from darkness to light, from humanity to divinity from untruth to truth.

"He alone is a really educated teacher, who is God-centred or Gurmukh
Who awakens divine intelligence in his disciples
Who meditates on the divine name with concentration
Who cherishes the Name in his mind,
Who gains the gain of God-realization,
Which is the main purpose of human life." * 7

An educated person, a scholar or a seer is one,
Who puts the garland of Ram Nam round his Neck." * 8

The garland of Ram Nam here stands for the adoption of values of knowledge, love, beauty and purity. 'Ram' stands for all-pervading universal spirit and 'Nam' for Name which is the very embodiment of truth, life, joy, beauty, purity, righteousness and heroism. *9 Thus the Guru is a spiritual preceptor. "He is a man helping his brothers, a child leading children, a light kindling other lights, an awakened soul awakening other souls, at highest a power of presence of the Divine calling to him other powers of the Divine." *10 He himself is perfect and leads his pupils to perfection. He is, in fact, supra personal because he is basically the context for the divine activity to be carried out. He is the most important aspect of the environment for spiritual development. Professor Betty Heimann has likened the Indian Guru to "Supra personal stepping stones to perfection." *11

A real teacher of the Guru's conception dispenses knowledge spontaneously. He is a constant seeker after truth. He digests what he reads and arrives at the reality and fixes his attention on the name of God. He makes his disciples realize the Truth. He unites them with the Ineffable through the word. He has no inclination for material considerations. He believes in the disinterested service of humanity. He is like a lotus-flower, fully blossomed who spreads fragrance of his virtues around and beautifies the world. Guru Arjan praises such a true teacher in these words:-

"Pandit is he who wakes his mind
And seeks within him His high Name.
And drinking deep its nectar sweet.
His sermons keep the world in frame.

With heart absorbed in holy lore,
By transmigration he is not bound.
All the holy books he penetrates,
And has the gross in the subtle found.
He guides all people high and low,
To such a Pandit always bow." * 12

A true teacher is perfect in thought, word and deed. He is fully illumined. He has gained divine knowledge. He has perfected his powers of body, mind and soul. He is merciful. He is pious. He is embodiment of humility. He is not proud of his learning. He considers himself the humble servant of mankind, the lowest of the low. He is free of contentment, bearing flowers of righteous conduct and fruit of spiritual illumination. He is a man of high character, and disciplined mind and body. All his actions are based on charity, love and unselfishness. He lives by his hard labour. Guru Nanak decries those teachers who live on the alms and offerings of their disciples. "Do not fall at the feet of him who calls himself a Guru or Pir and goes begging." * 13 The Guru of Guru Nanak's conception does not work for monetary gains. He is dedicated to his work disinterestedly. His work is his mission. The teacher who works only for amassing wealth is not a true teacher.

"The ego-centric selleth his knowledge
And poison he earneth and eateth" * 14

A true teacher earns his living by the sweat of his brow and out of that he contributes something for the welfare of humanity. He ponders over the essence of knowledge and becomes the benefactor of humanity. He is not an ascetic but leads the practical life of a Karam Yogi. He is like an ancient rishi fully devoted to the cause of humanity.

According to Tagore, only he can teach who can love. The greatest teachers of man have been lovers of men. * 15 In the opinion of the Sikh Gurus, a true teacher is like father, mother, brother and comrade. He is a friend, guide and philosopher. He thinks about the welfare of his disciple like a mother. In the words of Guru Ram Dass:

"As the mother brings up her son
And keeps him always in view;
She feeds him constantly,
And caresses him every moment.
So does the true Guru keep a disciple." * 16

This is what Gandhi Ji says in the modern world, 'The teacher has a mother's role to play. One who cannot take the place of a mother cannot be a teacher.' * 17

All the ten Gurus themselves were ideal teachers. We can take various examples from their lives which showed their boundless love for their disciples. The example of Guru Gobind Singh is before us. His four sons were killed. On not seeing her sons in the assembly of the Sikhs his wife questioned him:-

"Where are my four sons sire ?
Where are my four ?

And the reply the Guru gave is historical.

" What of thy four, O mother, ?
What of thy four ?
When lives the whole people,
The Khalsa here,
Gone, gone are thy four,
As sacrifice for the lives of these
Thousands more, all thy sons.
O mother, what if thy four are gone.

A true teacher is compassionate and sympathetic. With his love and understanding, he changes the life of his pupils. Guru Nanak's love flowed out to Lehna and he became 'Angad' a limb of the Master's body, an integral part of Nanak a radiant soul. Guru Nanak made him his successor and not any of his own sons. In the same way, Guru Gobind Singh merged himself in the Khalsa and endowed them with the spirit of his own personality. He is the unique example of bowing before his disciples at the time of nectar ceremony. Great is Gobind Singh who is the Guru and the disciple rolled into one. The Guru became the Khalsa and the Khalsa became the Guru. Bhai Gurdas praises this trait of the Guru in the following couplet:-

"There is born a supereman,
An Unparalleled warrior
Bravo, Bravo; Gobind Singh,
Thou art the Guru as well as the disciple." * 18

The Guru shows complete identification with his disciples.

"Khalsa is my true image,
In Khalsa do I dwell,
Khalsa is my face and limb,
With Khalsa do I live all time,
Khalsa is my true faith,

Khalsa is my own prestige." * 19

There are many examples in the life of Guru Gobind Singh which show his boundless love for his disciples. He had full faith and confidence in them. He was ready to sacrifice anything to uphold their dignity and honour. His disciples also loved him devotedly. They were always ready to die for him. This reciprocal love and confidence enabled him to rouse a sleeping nation. One example of S.Joga Singh will suffice. Joga Singh was a devoted Sikh of the Guru. His marriage ceremony was going on when he received a message from the great Guru to see him immediately. He left the marriage ceremony half way through and started for Anandpur. At Hoshiarpur he was bewitched by the beauty of a public woman. He made three successive attempts to seek admission into her privacy. But each time the appearance of a watchman, in full-fledged Sikh garb deterred him from committing a grave moral mistake. According to the Sikh tradition it was Guru Gobind Singh who appeared to him as a watchman. What a unique instance in history of teacher taught relationship ! A true teacher keeps his disciple on the right path and becomes the savior of his morality.

But it is very difficult to be really a true teacher. The path of a true teacher is the path of sadhna, devotion and sacrifice. Generally, we are encircled by false teachers. The Gurus have also described the traits of a false teacher and asked mankind to be cautious of them. Says Guru Nanak:-

"False is his speech and he usurps
What is not his,
And yet he goes out to preach to the others,
He who himself is beguiled,
Will beguile his company too,
But such, Nanak, today are the leaders of man." * 20

A false teacher exploits others. He lives on the alms of his disciples. He sells knowledge. He does not devote his mind to the disinterested pursuit of knowledge. So his mind is shallow. He is engaged in fruitless endeavours. Guru Nanak depicts the personality of such teacher and asks mankind to beware of him.

"If the leader be blind,
How will he know the right way ?
His mind is shallow,
And being deceived, he will be misled
If he walks not on the way
How will he reach the Lord's mansion,
For he is blinded in the mind,
One sees nothing, unaided by the Lord's name,

And the blind one is engaged in his fruitless strife." * 21

It is very essential to select a true teacher. Gurus ask the disciple first to see the commodity and then trade in it. Otherwise the disciples who have an ignorant Guru cannot secure a position of respect. * 22 The teacher and pupil both are misled.

"The disciples play instruments, the Gurus dance,
Shake their feet, roll their heads
The dust keeps flying and falls on their hair,
And the people, seeing it, laugh and go home;
It is for the sake of bread that they beat time,
And purposely fall on the ground." * 23

2. The Role of the Teacher

A true teacher serves as a beacon light that shows the right path to the disciple. spiritual, mental, moral and social development is possible with his help and guidance alone. He blesses the disciple with 'Dharma' (piety), 'Artha' (material gains), 'Kama' (fulfillment of worldly desires), and 'Moksha' (final emancipation). He helps the pupil in manifold ways.

(A) The Teacher prepares the Disciple for God Realization

In India, complete liberation and full human perfection have always been the goals of successful education. In the Vedas and the Upanishadas, it is clearly stated that education is that which liberates. The teacher has been considered as a spiritual preceptor who should awaken divine in man. Even in modern age Tagore, Gandhi, Vivekanand, Aurobindo have upheld this aim of education. Tagore lays down that the spiritual growth of the pupil is the main duty of the teacher. "The spiritual growth of man is the mark of the Guru and also the only measure of his success as an educator. * 24

With the Sikh Gurus, God-realization is one great aim of education. But this aim of education can hardly be achieved without the help of a true teacher. It is only through the Guru that disciple can have communion with God. The function of the true teacher is to unite the human soul with the Infinite soul. The Guru is the guide who leads the disciple to the mansion of God. Himself imbued with spiritual fervor, he enkindles the disciple's soul and awakens in his mind the consciousness of God. He is the vital link, the essential mediator of divine truth. He unites him with God. Guru is the ladder, Guru is the boat, and raft laden with the Name of Hari. He is the ship to cross the ocean of samsara. The disciple who serves the Guru and analyses his teachings, finds jewels and rubies in it. He bathes his mind in the ambrosia of knowledge. The Guru's word is inspired by God, Guru is Siva, Vishnu and Brahma.

Guru is Parbati, Laxmi and Saraswati. If one hearkens to the teachings of the Guru, he discovers diamonds, jewels and pearls hidden in his mind. Here the reference is to the hidden potentialities of the mind, which are discovered with the help of the Guru. He dispels the ignorance of human mind and shows the path of reality rending the veil asunder. It is through the grace of the true Guru that spiritual wisdom (Vedas) the divine music (Nadas) and divine union (yoga) are revealed to disciple.

“God through His grace sent Guru down to earth,
The Guru gave the collarium of lore divine,
Whose very touch disperses Mayaic mists.
And makes my eyes with inner vision shine.” * 25

This is what Kabir says:-

“Kabir, if one meets the true Guru,
And he, in his mercy blesses,
Then the gate of salvation is wide opened,
In peace one comes and goes.” * 26

The true Guru is a perfect personality who helps the disciple in various walks of life and ultimately leads him to identification with truth i.e God.

It is with the help of the true teacher that the mind of the disciple is cleansed and emancipated. The veil of ego is torn asunder and he sees God everywhere.

“The egg of superstition hath burst,
The mind is illumined,
The Guru hath cut the fetters of the feet,
And freed the captive.” * 27

In the “Sukhmani”, the fifth Guru has fully enumerated the role of a true teacher and the qualities he should possess. The true teacher gives the treasure of the Name divine to his disciples. He bestows true wisdom on them. The words of the Guru are hymns on earth. They are the purest gems of the priceless worth. They remove the doubts of mind. They are dyed with love divine and lead to the door of salvation. The fourth Guru Ram Dass calls the Guru a true friend and enlightener. The child is endowed with infinite potentialities which can be made to blossom with the able guidance of the teacher.

“The Guru, what enlightener, true friend thou art,
Revealing the name and illumining the heart

Giver of power to contemplate and muse on Lord,
Every moment, every day to meditate on True God." * 28

True Guru brings about the transformation of whole life. With the help of the Gurus, life becomes richer, happier and nobler. This fact is very elaborately brought out by the first Guru:-

"When the true Guru is merciful, faith is perfected;
When the true Guru is merciful, there is no grief;
When the true Guru is merciful, no sorrow is known;
When the true Guru is merciful, the love of God is enjoyed;
When the true Guru is merciful, there is no fear of death;
When the true Guru is merciful, bodily health and happiness is enjoyed;
When the true Guru is merciful, nine treasures of Name are obtained,
When the true Guru is merciful, we are fully identified with truth." * 29

(B) Acquisition of Real knowledge Through the Guidance of the Teacher

Knowledge illumines, says the Gita. * 30 The vedas and the Upnishadas, also, hold this view. But it is the teacher who leads the pupil from darkness to light, with the help of knowledge. Advatarko, Upnishad explains the meaning of the word Guru, 'Gu' means inertia, matter, ignorance and 'Ru' means light which illumines the consciousness. Thus the word 'Guru' means liberator of human life from the shackles of fear and ignorance. Thus Guru is one who removes ignorance and illumines the mind. * 31 This is what Guru Arjan Dev says in his "Sukhmani".

"The Guru blessed me with the collerium of wisdom
And darkness of my ignorance was dispelled,
By the grace of God I met the saint Guru
And my mind was illuminated." * 32

Knowledge is power and this power of knowledge one acquires through one's Guru who takes the torch of knowledge into the dark recesses of the pupil's mind. The teacher enkindles the spirit of Nisus in the child and inspires him with progressive outlook. 'Thus far and go further'. The Guru perfects the disciples' mind through constant discipline of knowledge and rational thinking. He inculcates scientific thinking and reasoning in them. Guru Nanak found people throwing water towards the sun at Haridwar. He started throwing water in the opposite direction. If their water could reach the sun why could not his water reach Kartarpur which was much nearer? This spirit of questioning and rational analysis widens the mental horizon of the pupil. With proper guidance and right knowledge he becomes free from superstitions and dogmas. His vision becomes clear and he is able to see the reality. That is why the Sikh Gurus

have attached great importance to the role of the teacher in the life of the pupil. Without the Guru; there is darkness. The Guru takes us out of illusion and puts us on the right path. Real knowledge is gained only with the help of a true teacher, says the first Guru:-

"The water is kept controlled in a pitcher,
But there can be no pitcher without the use of water.
Similarly mind is kept under control, through attainment of knowledge
But knowledge cannot be attained without the help of the Guru." * 33

All the godly values and saintly virtues are inherent in us. There are latent faculties in man. But they lie dormant. It is the torch of the Guru that energizes them.

"Gems, jewels, rubies,
Are in the mind,
If one were to find,
Should hearken to the Guru's call,
It is He who giveth to each and all,
On Him, On Him, O Let me call." * 34

Mind has got great powers. But they blossom with the help of the Guru:-

"The mind is the king
The king is the ruler,
But who can enlighten it,
Without the guidance of the Guru." * 35

In his quest for knowledge and the right way of life, the pupil's mind wanders. It experiences uncertainty and instability. It is torn by doubts and conflicts. Inconsistency haunts it. In such a state of mind, only the guidance of the Guru imparts light and restores confidence. It offers direction and purpose to one's life. Mental doubts depart and with stable mind one marches ahead. Surely, one is on the right path when kindly light leads:-

"The Guru enkindles deep knowledge which dispels
Darkness and ignorance of mind." * 36

The word of the Guru is the light which leads to Truth. He is the lamp which illumines the life.

"The Guru enkindled the mind with his torch
And there was light of knowledge everywhere." * 37

(C) The Teacher and the Social and Moral Development of the Pupil

“To uphold and advance righteousness,
And emancipate the good, the saint in us,
To extricate evil and evil-doers root and branch,
And to create a nation of God-conscious persons,
By turning men into gods.” * 38

Guru Gobind Singh states the mission of his life in the above lines and that can also be called the mission of a true teacher. A true teacher initiates his pupils into a world of action. He infuses in them self-confidence, courage and fearlessness to enable them to fight the battle of life heroically. He teaches them dignity of labour and to earn their living with honest labour. He inspires them to work hard and achieve material prosperity. Spiritualism does not mean escapism for him. “Perfection in work is the real Yoga”, says Gita. * 39 The teacher enables his pupils to achieve this yoga. This right type of knowledge imparted by the right teacher raises the pupil in social estimation. The kind and amount of the contribution an educated individual makes to his society is greatly linked with what the teacher gives to him:-

“The Guru’s words are the jewels (of wisdom)
And whosoever seeketh, findeth these;
Verily, one who gets education,
Through the grace of the Guru, gets the honour of life,
Yes, without the Guru, one loseth the merit of life.” *40

There can be no honour without the Guru and no emancipation without honour. A rightly educated person gets honour in society. A true teacher helps the pupil to inculcate various virtues in life which develop his personality. With fully blossomed personality, he spreads fragrance around him. Education promotes in him social and civic virtues like fellow-feeling, disinterested service of mankind and co-operation, which promote social efficiency and happiness. For him essence of wisdom becomes the service of humanity.

“If one dwells on the essence of knowledge,
One becomes the benefactor of all.*41

Under the guidance of a true teacher, the disciple leads a noble and disciplined life. He inculcates such high ideals in life that he becomes not only socially acceptable, but also acceptable in the court of Lord.

A rightly educated person whose soul and mind,
Are awakened into the realm of self-realization,
Becomes acceptable in the court of Lord,
Surely, there flies the flag of God's kingdom over his head. *42

The life history of Guru Gobind Singh shows how a great Guru can transform the very life of a pupil. He was a saint-soldier who infused such a high spirit in his disciples that they became real warriors in the battle of life. He raised the dormant energies of a vanquished people and filled them with a rare spirit of valour and confidence. He put great faith and confidence in his pupils and they rose to his expectations. The change was psychological. One of my Sikhs he said "will fight a hundred thousand or I will not be called Guru Gobind Singh". Men who had never touched a sword or shouldered a gun, became heroes. Confectioners and washer men and sweepers and barbers became leaders of armies before whom the Rajas quailed and the Nawabs cowered with terror." * 43

The great Guru was able to achieve this transformation of his disciples because he held them in great esteem and raised their social status. In all humility, he pays a glowing tribute to his disciples for all that he has achieved in his life.

"Through their grace, I have attained all learning,
Through their help in battles, I have slain all my enemies.
I was born to serve them, through them I reached eminence.
What would I have been without their kind and ready help ?
There are millions of insignificant people like me." * 44

This unbounded respect and love is sure to raise the morale of a pupil and raise him in the eyes of others and his own eyes. This was not merely a verbal tribute paid by the Guru. He practically showed that he loved his disciples. He sacrificed his all to save their honour and life. At the time of his death he encouraged his disciples in these words:

"Wherever, there are five Sikhs assembled, who abide by the Guru's teachings, know that I am in the midst of them. Henceforward, the Guru shall be the Khalsa and the Khalsa the Guru. I have infused by mental and bodily spirit into the Granth Sahib and the Khalsa." * 45

A good teacher not only helps in the social development of the pupil, he helps in the moral uplift also. The transformation of Sajjan Thug and Kauda Rakshas underlines the great truth that in every one of us there are good as well as evil tendencies and it is only when

the good tendencies get forceful encouragement through the magic touch of a great teacher that man projects an image of goodness and nobility.

In every one of us, there is a Dr. Jekyll and Mr Hyde, and it is the role of a good educator, through constant instruction, personal inspiration and the creation of congenial environment, to bring out the latent good in all of us.

The true Guru helps the disciple to overcome his weaknesses, vices and to become morally strong. His own example of living and teachings helps to build a good character and strengthen his moral fiber. He is able to resist temptations. He becomes pure in word, deed and thought. The Guru with his moral force converts the natural man into an ideal man.

"The Guru is an ocean, a mine of jewels,
In which lie a number of precious stones,
I bathe in the pure waters when it is the Lord's will;
And thus by meditation, I acquire the five blessings
(Truth, Contentment, Compassion, Dharma and Patience)
I abandon lust, anger, deceit and evil,
And enshrine the true name in my heart.
The wave of pride and covetousness has spent itself.
The Merciful one has been found.
Nanak, there is no 'Tirath' like the Guru
(Nothing to compare to) the true Guru Gopal." * 46

On meeting the true Guru one becomes pure by adopting the disciples of truth. The disciple who serves the Guru and analysis his teachings, finds jewels and rubies in it. He bathes his mind in the nectar of knowledge which contains the purifying elements of the sixty eight 'tiraths'. There is no 'Tirath' like the Guru Gopal.

The disciple becomes Gurmukh, a God-centred soul with the grace of the Guru. He is blessed with Name, compassion and purity. Activity based on the Guru's word makes him ethically perfect. He keeps this motto before him.

"Truth is high but higher still is truthful living." * 47

"Thus in moulding the career of the disciple, the personality of the Guru is all along operative, commanding his whole being and shaping his life to its divine issues. Without such a personality, there would be no cohesion, no direction in the moral forces of society and inspiration of a thousand kinds of knowledge, there would still be utter darkness." * 48

This transformation of the disciple comes through close association with the Guru. This relationship with the teacher does not remain on physical level. It becomes communion of the soul with the soul. The ray is united with the sun. water blends with water. Light blends with light. There is complete identification of the teacher with the taught. Perfection is achieved. Lehna becomes Anagad, the flesh of his Master's flesh and the bone of his Master's bone. The Guru bows before the disciple and nails him as the Guru.

"He who lives the right life is my disciple,
Nay, he is my master and I am his servant." * 49

This complete identification of the Guru with the disciple is a unique phenomenon of the conception of Guru in the educational philosophy of the Sikh Gurus.

For disciplined life and moral elevation, Guru Gobind Singh suggested the use of five symbols for his disciples. These symbols have got disciplinary value and keep the disciple on the right path. He has also given a code of conduct known as 'Rahitnama' which contains the principles of right conduct. So these guiding principles and directions enable the pupil to lead a moral life and help in character development.

The wide Concept of Guru

Besides the human Guru, the enlightened and the perfect teacher, the Sikh Gurus consider God, Self, Word, Guru Granth Sahib and Sangat as 'Guru'.

(A) God as Guru

The tradition of calling God as a True Guru or Great Teacher is also very old. The study of the Vedas and the Upanishadas reveal that they have also taken God as Guru. In Patanjali's "Yogdarshan", it is clearly stated "The Immortal God is my Guru." *50 In his verses Kabir is also sometimes found using the word Guru for God whom he calls Satguru.

"Thou (God) art the true Guru I am thy novice." * 51

The Sikh Gurus have taken God as the supreme Teacher, the original source of all light, wisdom and spiritualism. He is the primary teacher and fountain-head of all knowledge. In his famous song of Arti, Guru Nanak says:-

"Surely, God is the fountain-head of all light,
It is His light indeed which illumines all lights of the Universe,
This light is imparted to man through revealed Education of the Divine Teacher (God)." * 52

This divine teacher is the primal Guru of Guru Nanak. He dwells in every heart. He is the innate guide.

"The immaculate Lord, the Essence of all things,
Pervades all, and He is not separate from me.
And it is Him I have met the Transcendent Lord,
Our infinite and supreme God who is our only Guru." * 53

Guru Arjan Dev, also, speaks of God as Guru:-

"The Guru is all powerful
The Guru is Himself, the Formless Lord,
The Guru is highest, unfathomable and limitless.
Ineffable is His praise, what can a sayer say." * 54

Guru Gobind Singh in his "Dasam Granth" considers God as his true and supreme teacher. While speaking of his birth, the Guru states in most clear terms that his birth is due to the devotion of his parents to the supreme Guru who being pleased with their devotion sent him on mission.

"The supreme Guru was pleased with their devotion to Him.
When God gave me this order I assumed birth in this Kal age
The divine Guru sent me for the uplift of religion." * 55

Before realizing the truth, the disciple receives instructions from Guru but as soon as he realizes the truth, he himself gets into direct contact with God, the source of knowledge and light. Then God Himself becomes his Guru and leads him higher and higher.

"Meeting with the true Guru, one is disciplined by truth and thus made pure.
And one scales the heights higher and higher still." * 56

But everybody may not be able to adopt God as the Guru directly. It is only the enlightened personalities who are able to do that. For ordinary people, God's Guruship expresses itself through enlightened personalities. One's own inner Atma, meditation, nature and revealed books. But to gain from all these sources in the fullest manner, the indispensable help of the teacher is needed who will fully utilize these means to achieve his aim, the perfection of his disciple's personality and help him to realize himself.

(B) Self as Guru

McLeod talking of self as Guru of Kabir writes, "As we have already seen there appears to be little doubt that Kabir had no human Guru, but for him the Guru or Satguru

represented the inner voice, the mystical movement of God in the depths of the individual being, the light of God shed abroad in the inner most recesses of the human soul. The Guru remains the vital link, the essential mediator of divine truth, but no longer a human link." * 57

From these lines of McLeod, it becomes quite clear that the indwelling Divine, the real self in man is, also, the Guru who teaches through the gentle voice of conscience. The inner self of man is the enlightener. The secret and Divine light in man can be made manifest through a severe discipline of self-control, patience, intellect, fear of God, suffering and asceticism. When one's ego dies, one's intuition awakens and one scales the heights higher and higher still. One visualizes the truth and keeps on the right path.

"And if thy ego dies,
To thy mind will be revealed the Essence,
When one's intuition awakens,
One sees one's Home within oneself;
Meeting with the True Guru,
One is disciplined by truth and thus made pure,
And one scales the heights higher and higher still." * 58

In the "Gita" Krishna, also speaks of self or Inner conscience of man as Guru. While talking to Udhav he says that "Inner conscience of man is his Guru". Man is able to visualize his welfare or loss by dint of his practical experience and accumulated knowledge, meaning there by that the indwelling God becomes his innate guide. By following the innate guide, many people arrive at their destination. There is God as well as devil in man. When godly virtues dominate, man hears the voice of his inner Atma clearly. Many of us may have experienced that when we are going to commit an evil act for the first time, our conscience pricks. If we hear the voice of our conscience and overcome temptations, we are on the safe side of virtue. This inner Atma becomes our permanent guide. But if we ignore this inner voice, again and again, and go on committing evil acts, then a time comes when we do not hear this voice at all. Our soul becomes deadened. We are lost for ever. That is why the Gurus caution us: "Man you are the image of God. Know thy Essence. By knowing this Essence man treads on the right path."

"My mind is the Guru who has instructed me in wisdom
So that desire, its mother has turned away from me." * 59

Human body is the temple of God. Man has got a storehouse of energy. He has got great potentialities to solve his own problems through reason, judgment and action. He can carve out his own destiny by his own efforts. When man recognizes his higher self, the divinity in himself, he undergoes a wonderful change. This divine consciousness helps him to distinguish between right and wrong, good and bad, virtue and vice. His will power and

character are developed. He develops strength to resist temptations. This divine consciousness gives him mental balance and keeps him on the right path. It prevents him from becoming acquisitive, over ambitious or greedy. It inspires him to be kind and helpful to the less fortunate ones. "When this God-consciousness becomes a part of conscience, a monitor, a deep and all-pervasive sentiment in man's every day life influencing and guiding his behavior as a second nature, 'Man says Guru Nanak, undergoes a wonderful change, which is not easy to describe. Such God-consciousness awakens his spirit and gives him insight into the heart of things." * 60 Here self becomes his Guru.

(C) Word as Guru

Word (Shabad) is also called Guru by Guru Nanak, in Sidhgosht. When Guru Nanak had discussions with the yogis (sidhas) they asked him a question, who was his Guru ? He replied 'Shabda' was his Guru. This conversation has been given in Sidhgosht:

The yogi's question was:

"Who is your Guru ? Whose disciple are you ?"

The reply Guru Nanak gave is:

"The word (Shabad) is the Guru,
And the mind attuned to the Shabad disciple
The Shabad is the Guru, teacher, fathomless and calm,
Without the Shabad the people wander astray,
Attune your mind to the word, Guru." *61

So Word is the Guru of Guru Nanak. Word (the living voice of God) imparts truth to man. The Shabad is the Guru's word, the revelation of God which lies in the depth of human soul. According to McLeod, "For Guru Nanak, the word is accordingly the gurupadesh, that expression of God's truth which is imparted to man by the Guru." * 62 The word is the embodiment of Gurus. He who searcheth me, findeth me in the word." *63 It is the vehicle of revelation or in other words it is the revelation of God through the Guru. The Eternal Truth described by the human Guru is called Guru Shabda. The Guru is the Voice of God and the Guru is the word, the truth of God. God is, also, identified with the word.

"Thou art the word and Thou art its expression." * 64

And it is through the word that creation and dissolution of the world takes place.

"Through the Word is the creation and the dissolution of the Universe,
Through the Word the evolution of creation began." * 65

Guru's word is Nada. Guru's word is Veda. Guru's word is inspired by God. Mind is controlled through the Guru's word. The word is replete with knowledge and truth. It is the key to self-exploration. It is that taper that aids in self-observation. It is 'Trai Lok Dipak' Shabad Chanan. Incorporated word is the Gyan Guru. It dispels doubts and gives peace of mind. It helps one to enjoy the fruits of contemplation and removes the five evils from within.

"And the word seems sweet to me,
And my sins are dispelled,
And also the malady of ego and fear,
And I enter into the state of poise all-too-spontaneously,
Blest with the Guru's word, the bed of the body becomes cosy,
And through the quintessence of wisdom,
I revel in the Lord's joy." 66

Through word one gains self-realization. It helps in the acquisition of knowledge and moral values. It frees one from evil impulses, sorrows and ignorance.

"By hearing the word,
One sounds the depths. Of virtue's sea,
By hearing the word
One acquires learning, holiness and royalty." * 67

The word of the Guru is the voice of God. It vibrates with the presence of God. Reflection on the word leads to the knowledge of self. The Guru's word is ever pure and ever illuminating.

"By hearing the word,
Men achieve wisdom, saintliness and courage,
By hearing the word,
Men learn of the earth, the power that supports it and the firmament.
By hearing the word,
Men learn of the upper and nether regions, of islands and continents.
By hearing the word,
Men conquer the fear of the death and the elements.
O, Nanak, the word hath such magic for the worshippers,
Those that hear, death, do not fear,
Their sorrows end and sins disappear." * 68

The Guru's word has the sage's wisdom. It is full of learning. God Himself speaks through it.

"He has neither form, colour, nor material sign,
But He is revealed through the true world (Shabad)." * 69

And by meditating on the Guru's word, one attains God. Meditating on the word (Shabad) repeating the name of God, he is released. * 70

(D) The Guru Granth Sahib as Guru

From times immemorial, spiritual book like "Vedas" "Upnishads", "Gita", "Ramayana" have been serving as guides and giving inspiration to thousands of people. They are the eternal source of guidance. They contain the priceless 'gems of ray serene'. In the same way, the "Adi Granth" is regarded 'Guru' by the Sikhs as instructed by the tenth Master. The Sikhs enquired from Guru Gobind Singh at the time of his death as to who would be their Guru in future, and who would give them light and spiritual guidance? The Satguru replied that they would get it from the Guru's Shabad, the Gurbani incorporated and conserved in the "Adi Granth", "I have infused my mental and bodily spirit into the Granth Sahib and the Khalsa". "O Beloved Khalsa, let him who desireth to behold me, behold the Granth Sahib, obey the Granth Sahib. It is the visible body of the Guru. And let him who desireth to meet me diligently search in its hymns." *71 And the voice was stilled but not the word. The word abides.

The "Adi Granth" is called Guru as it throws light on the path leading to the highest goal of spirituality. Its study serves as a guide. It contains priceless gems of wisdom. Guru Arjan, who did a tremendous service to mankind by compiling the Guru Granth Sahib, a priceless gift which he has bestowed on humanity, says in the "Sukhmani" that "just as a column supports the roof, similarly the Guru's word keeps the way farer firm on his path." * 72 Again he says that the book containing the divine word is the abode of God Himself. * 73

"When I opened the treasures of my Masters,
How immensely was my mind pleased at the (spiritual) find,
Neither pearls nor rubies is the price,
For the brimful storehouse, inexhaustible and beyond measure,
Spend as much as I may with all my company,
(But) it diminishes not and is ever on the increase,
Says Nanak, 'He' on whose forehead, is so writ,
He alone is made to partake of this treasure." *74

Gurbani possesses immense wealth. It is a source of light and life to innumerable people. Its sweet songs are blissful.

"So sublime is the Lord's word,
That hymning through it the Lord's praise,
One attains supreme bliss.

Sweet is the Lord's Gospel of poise,
For it proclaims the unutterable truth." * 75

What is true of word or shabada as a teacher is also true of Guru Granth Sahib as a teacher. It possesses the same value. It helps and guides us in all the affairs of life. It has got ennobling effect. It gives us solace and peace of mind. It strengthens us morally. That is why Guru Arjan says:-

"The Bani is the Guru and the Guru is the Bani,
For all the nectars are enshrined in it." * 76

Since the time of Guru Gobind Singh, the Sikhs regard Guru Granth as their Guru. They have got immense faith in it. For them the Guru's spirit is ever present in it. This sense of the indwelling presence of the Guru has shaped the course of their history and led to many noblest endeavours in the annals of mankind in the cause of humanity, dignity and freedom.

(E) Sangat as Guru

"All the Janamsakhis are unanimous in stating that Nanak courted the retirement of the forest and the society of the religious men who frequented it. Several of them were profoundly versed in the Indian religious literature of the age. They had also travelled far and wide within the limits of Hindustan, and met its renowned teachers. Nanak, thus, became acquainted with the latest teachings of Indian philosophers and reformers," * 77 writes Macauliffe. This shows that the association of the saints was a source of learning for Guru Nanak also. The Gurus have attached great importance to sat or sadh sangat i.e. association with the pious. For them the true company is an academy of the true Guru where the teachings in the merit of God are imparted to the disciples." The society of the saints is the school where one is instructed in the merits of God.* 78 The advantages of such association are described in glowing terms in Guru "Granth" Sahib. In "Sukhmani" Sahib, Guru Arjan devotes many verses to assert that Sadh Sangat is the very basis of true religious life.

"In the society of the saints
One comprehends the incomprehensible,
And one's inside flowers.
In the society of the saints,
One disciplines one's five desires,
And one takes the nectar of the Lord's name.
In the society of the saints
One becomes humble like the dust,

And one's speech becomes sweet." * 79

Guru Nanak defines Sat Sangat as the society where the name of one God alone is mentioned. The fourth Guru says that God dwells in the company of the saints.*80 "I join the society of the holy and know that it is there that abides my Lord God." *81 The last words of Guru Gobind Singh to his disciples were, "Let him who wishes to see me go to an assembly of the Sikhs and approach them with faith and reverence and he will surely see me amongst them." Thus, God or Guru dwells in Sangat and becomes a permanent source of instruction and inspiration. By holy association, lamp of divine light is lit. One is purged of one's evil impulses in a saintly company. Sajjan Thug came in contact with Guru Nanak and was transformed. Bidhi Chand was a dacoit but in the company of the fifth Guru, he turned over a new leaf. Man is the product of environment. Great men's powerful personalities at once influence the mind. In many cases, they radically transform one's life. The chief advantage of the saint's company lies in elevating the human life.

"Meeting with the Lord's devotees,
One is in bliss and hears the beautiful gospel of the Lord.
And then one is rid of the soil of evil-minded-ness
And associated with the saints
One is blessed with wisdom." * 82

Sadh Sangat not only helps in spiritual progress but also in social development. In Sadh Sangat, there is no difference between man and man. All are equal and there are no barriers of caste and creed. They believe in fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man. They work and dine together. They even share their earnings with others. For them service of the Sangat becomes the service of God. They develop social virtues like fellow-feeling, co-operation, tolerance, love and sympathy. The Sikh congregations are very democratic in set-up. After the baptism ceremony, the tenth Guru folded his hands before the "five chosen" and asked to be baptized. In Sangat one learns humility and sweetness. How Sangat trains one in social and civic efficiency and in social behavior is very beautifully described by the fifth Guru.

"I have forgotten to speak or think ill of any one,
Ever since I learnt to live in the company of the good and holy saints,
No one is my enemy nor is any one stranger to me
I get on well (am on good terms) with one and all." *83

Equally important are Gurus views about the disciple, the learner. To be worthy of studentship and learning, a young man should possess certain special qualities and pass through a life of disciples and austerity.

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CHAPTER IX

THE CONCEPT OF DISCIPLINE AND DISCIPLE

To be educated rightly involves great effort on the part of the disciple. No intellectual, social, moral or spiritual development is possible without conscious endeavor on the part of the educand. This endeavor is possible only when one leads an ordered and disciplined life.

In our culture, there has always been an emphasis on so disciplining the life of the student that he is capable of concentrating, exclusively, all his energies upon education in order to seek his fullest development. The teacher has, very often, been imposing his will on the student, providing him with full guidance and trying to develop him according to the standards and ideals cherished by him.

Recent developments in the field of psychology have brought into limelight, greater respect for child's nature. The child is, now, no longer, taken to be a mouldable matter in the hands of the teacher alone. The concept of discipline has, accordingly, undergone a great change. Educationists now recommend that an effort be made to help the child to discipline himself. Self-discipline, is thus, considered to be more significant than the discipline from outside.

The Gurus seem to follow the middle path. They do emphasize the role of the teacher in the life of the pupil and demand implicit obedience and fullest devotion for the teacher on the part of the pupil. But they also make a strong appeal for awakening in the mind of the child, a consciousness for making his own life better under self-imposed discipline. They equally emphasize the individual's own effort to cultivate desirable virtues in himself and sublimate the evil impulses by leading a disciplined life.

WHAT IS DISCIPLINE?

The Gurus have attached importance to discipline. "He alone loves God, whose mind is disciplined." *1 holds Guru Nanak. "I am not enamoured of a Sikh for what he is but what is dear to my heart, is his disciplined conduct." * 2, says Guru Gobind Singh.

Sehaj is the state of enlightenment achieved through self-discipline and is accepted to be the ultimate goal which the religious and spiritual discipline laid down by Guru Nanak was supposed to lead to *3, meaning thereby that the goal of life and education is union with God. This goal can be achieved with the help of 'sadhana' or discipline. The way itself is meditation, with adoring love, upon divine qualities. The result is the cleansing and disciplining of the mind which leads to union with God. * 4

The Gurus have used the words 'Hukam' (divine ordinance), 'Sanjam' (discipline), 'Bhau' (fear of God), and 'Santokh' (contentment, resignation to the will of God) for discipline. In the very first stanza of 'Japji', Guru Nanak points out very clearly that man's aim of life is to become a seer of truth by removing the veil of ego which stands between him and God. Man can be successful in this endeavor if he follows the 'Hukam' of the Master.

"How shall then we know the truth ?
How shall we rend the veil of untruth away ?
Abide thou by His will (Hukam)
And make thine own His will,
O Nanak, thus is truth attained." * 5

To follow God's ordinance (Hukam) is to set up spiritual discipline in life. Then only one can become seeker after truth. In Asa-di-war, Guru Nanak has given the characteristics of a disciplined man which can help us to form an idea of his concept of discipline.

"It is the man of discipline, indeed,
Who can serve the world properly
It is the men of true discipline, indeed,
Who contemplate God, the all-Truth, reality,
Who do not step on the wrong path,
Who practice religion through performance of noble deeds.
Who observe the path of moderation,
In the matter of food and drink
Who dedicate themselves to God,
The eternal giver of gifts every day, more and more,
To rise in divine optimism ever and ever;
And they attain God the great,
Through evolution of the greatness of His name in life." * 6

The term 'Sikh' is a changed form of the word 'Shish' which literally means a disciple; and Sikhism is a disciplined creed, a discipline of the body, of the mind and of the soul. In other words Sikhism is disciplinism.* 7 In simple words, we can say that discipline is the training of the body, mind and soul, to act according to rules, orders and regulations. It means moderation, control, sublimation and balance in our thought, word, deed and desire. It is the root of all the virtues. Without it men become slaves of their wild desires.

This discipline of the Gurus conception has got four aspects, physical, mental, moral and spiritual. Gradual and voluntary discipline of the mind and body will bring out the

essential goodness inherent in the individual. Physical discipline consists in keeping the body healthy, neat and clean and keeping the senses under control.

“One controlling one’s senses is the master of true discipline.” * 8

Physical discipline emphasizes a life of action, hard labour and service to humanity. By controlling will, by subduing wild passions with the force of true love and by honestly doing the duties of a householder, rather than becoming a recluse or ascetic, one disciplines one’s life.

“Even with stern bodily discipline,
With austerities performed head downwards
Egoism still may not leave the mind,
Ritual actions bring not realization.” * 9

In mental discipline, the Gurus emphasize the conquest of the mind. Conquering the mind is the conquest of the world. * 10 The preparation for this conquest lies along the path of meditation or concentration on God and the destruction or effacement of egotism (haumai). Mental discipline depends upon the purification of one’s inner being. How can one achieve that ? Guru Nanak’s clear answer is by loving devotion and adoration of God and remembrance of His name.

“The God-man abides in the Lord’s fear
And, through the word overwhelms the wild (mind)
He sings the immaculate praise of God,
And attains he the state of unalloyed bliss,
He contemplates the Lord, body and soul,
And so merges he in Truth.” * 11

The Gurus have greatly emphasized spiritual discipline. Self purification, love and devotion, concentration, and meditation on God, association with holy people, service to mankind and good actions are essential for spiritual discipline. Humility, self-effacement, the dedication of the mind, body and soul to the cause of truth lead to it. This spiritual discipline recommended by the Guru does not believe in physical torture and self-denial.

The inculcation of discipline in life requires obedience to superior authority. The ideal of surrender and devotion is the basis of discipline. Submission to authority combines an element of fear in it. This element of fear makes one disciplined. This element of fear brings us under the discipline of the preceptor under whom the life of love and devotion begins. This fear creates feeling of spiritual awe, * 12 and makes the elements of nature work in a disciplined manner.

“Through fear of Him, the wind blows;
Through fear of Him, lakhs of rivers flow;
Through fear of Him, laboures the fire;
Through fear of Him, the earth remains over-burdened;
Through fear of Him, stand Yama at his gate;
Through fear of Him, move the sun and the moon;
They traverse millions of miles, with no end.
Under His fear are Siddhas, Buddhas, gods and Nathas
Under His fear the skies have spread;
Under His fear are warriors and brave people;
Under His fear multitudes come and go.
All are under His fear with the writing on the forehead,
Only one, True and Formless, is fearless.” * 13

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE DISCIPLE

In Sidhghost, the yogis ask Guru Nanak “Who is your Guru ? Whose disciple you are ?” Guru Nanak replies “The word (shabad) is the Guru and the mind attuned to the ‘Shabad’ is the disciple.” * 14 In this dialogue, we have the definition of both the Guru and the disciple. A true disciple is one who is fully attuned to the Guru’s word. A disciple is one who follows the discipline of the Guru. A disciple of Guru’s conception has got the following qualities.

1. Fully Dedicated Soul

The disciple is a fully dedicated soul. He is a seeker after truth. He does not take things for granted. He verifies their truth in the real spirit of a researcher. He believes in the essence of religion and not in its outward trappings. He lives a worldly-disciplined life. He has a strong sense of service for the Guru and the general man-kind. He possesses dignity of labour. He does his work with fullest dedication and concentration. Guru Nanak says:-

“The true disciple serves God
By dedicating his actions to Him,
His life is imbued with the
Nectar of Name and Truth.
By reflecting on the Guru’s word,
The disciple has learnt this:
That it is through the Lord’s grace
That one is ferried across.
Verily, the way of true disciple is,
The way of Karam-yoga,
Which is inspired by God’s grace.

The way surely takes him across:
The ocean of life.
With the laurels of success, glory and honour." * 15

2. Reverence for the Teacher

The disciple of the Guru's conception has great reverence for the teacher. He has implicit faith in the Guru, because he knows that love and devotion enlighten the mind. He places himself fully into the hands of the Guru because he knows that he will be able to achieve his aim of education and develop his latent potentialities with his help only. For him Guru is a beacon light who shows him the right path. That is why he is ready to sacrifice himself for his Guru.

"I am a sacrifice to my Guru
A myriad times a day,
Who made angels of man
And yea without delay." * 16

3. Obedience to the Teacher and Unconditional Surrender

Tradition affirms that towards the close of his life, Guru Nanak began a systematic trial of his disciples, * 17 his object being to select someone worthy of Guruship after his death. These trials generally took the form of apparently unreasonable commands at unreasonable times by the Guru over those around him. Only Lehna came successful out of these ordeals as he obeyed him without questioning and hesitation. These trials show that the first and foremost quality a disciple of the Guru's conception should possess is implicit obedience and unconditional surrender to the Guru. Guru Nanak tried Lehna and found him pure like gold and altogether fit for the exalted office of the Guru.

"Between thee and me, there is now no difference. None of my Sikhs hath such faith and confidence in me as thou and therefore I love thee most of all. Thou are verily Angad, a part of my body." * 18

The principal qualities of Guru Angad's character were devoted service and love of the Guru. He was an embodiment of obedience. He had made great progress in virtue and spirituality. It was due to these qualities that he succeeded to Guruship in the teeth of opposition by the wife, sons and relations of Guru Nanak. For the same reasons, Guru Angad, in spite of the opposition of his own relatives, conferred the Guruship on Amar Dass who proved to be the most worthy of this high dignity. Guru Amar Dass found Jetha (Ram Dass) the incarnation of devotion, religiosity, nobility and humility. He performed such unremitting service day and night for the Guru that he allowed himself no repose of mind and body. Such

examples can be multiplied from the lives of the successor Gurus, which show that according to the Sikh tradition, the sin-qua-non of eligibility to the Guruship, or in other words, the essential requisite of an ideal disciple was implicit surrender to the Guru 'Sacrificium intellectus' as Trumpp would call it. *19 Guru Nanak also expressed this idea in these words:

"If thou desire to play at love with me,
Come my way with thy head in the palm of the hand,
Put thy feet on this road,
Give thy head and care not other's opinion." * 20

Here is a demand for complete self-sacrifice. In the same strain, Guru Amar Dass asks his disciples to entrust body, mind and soul to the Guru and obey his order if they really wanted to succeed:

"Sikhs of the Guru and friends walk in God's way
Faithfully obey what the Guru preacheth.
Hear, servants of God and brethren,
Serve the Guru very promptly.
Tie up service to the Guru as
Thy travelling expenses of the journey to God
Think not of-to-day or to-morrow." * 21

Absolute surrender to the Guru is one of the fundamental qualities of a disciple according to the Sikh Gurus. This devotion for the Guru on the part of the disciple conforms with Indian tradition. Charaka states the pupil should serve his teacher as he serves Agni, Deva, King, Father and Master with steady devotion. In the farewell address at the end of his education, the pupil was advised to serve his Guru like a God. * 22 He was advised to remain obedient to his teacher till his end.* 23 Thus respect for the teacher is typical of Indian tradition. Respect for the Guru and devotion to him is necessary if one's education is to be successful. Even in modern times, Gandhi advocates devotion to the teacher (Gurubakhti). He felt that in the absence of devotion to the teacher, education would be dissipated and the building of character difficult to achieve. * 24

Love and respect on the part of the disciple is equally reciprocated by the Guru who is deeply attached to his disciple. Guru Gobind Singh took his disciples as his Gurus. Once he folded his hands before them and requested to be baptized by them. As one lamp is lit from another, in the same way, the Guru enlightens the personality of the disciple and there comes a time when the disciple achieves such perfection that there remains no difference between the Guru and the disciple; the two are identical. Guru Ram Dass says:

"The Guru is in the Sikh,
The Sikh in the Guru,

For both (promote) the instructions of the great Guru (God).” * 25

And Bhai Gurdas asserts again and again that “The Guru is the Sikh (disciple) and the Sikh (disciple) is the Guru. There is no difference between the two.” * 26

The Gurus preserved the ancient Indian tradition of the filial relationship between the teacher and the taught. The teacher was regarded as the spiritual father of his pupils. * 27 This mystical union between the teacher and the taught is quite unique in the history of our educational thought and practice.

4. Discipline of Body, Mind and Spirit

The Gurus ask their disciples to discipline their physical, mental and spiritual faculties. The body is the gift of God and the disciple should keep it in a healthy condition by regular habits and good diet taken in moderation. He is not to torture it by keeping fasts and doing ascetic exercises. Smoking and use of intoxicants are prohibited.

“Avoid such foods which cause pain to the body
And passion in the mind.
Avoid such dress which cause pain to the body
And passion in the mind.” * 28

These disciplinary regulations act unceasingly as impersonal teachers. Such type of disciplinary practices have been in vogue in India since times immemorial. The pupil was trained to a simple life, whether he was rich or poor and habits of discipline, reverence and self-respect were inculcated. Chastity was strictly enjoined. The period of studentship of the Brahmachari was regarded as a period of discipline in an ashrama. * 29

The disciple of the Guru’s conception is a seeker after truth. Ignorance is a spiritual bondage. The Gurus emphasize mental discipline through acquisition of knowledge. Guru Nanak gives three steps for the cultivation of knowledge. These three steps are Suniya (hearing or listening), Ek Dhyan (Concentration, assimilation or synthesis). Complete knowledge can be attained only when the disciple first listens to the words of the Guru. Next he meditates and having reflected and meditated he assimilates the truth so gained.” * 30

Suniya (hearing) is the first step of acquiring knowledge. What should a seeker hear about? He should hear about the lives of the persons who have attained self realization. He should listen to the holy songs and the great qualities of the supreme being sung by the holy musicians in the holy congregation or sangat in a holy place or Dharam Sala. Such hearing will lead to a perpetual transformation of the mind because as one thinks so one becomes. Guru Nanak asks the seeker to listen to the explanation of the moral principles and learn about such fundamental qualities like wisdom, contentment and purity. He should implement in thought

word and deed every thing that has been listened to. This hearing leads, to the expansion of the consciousness and attainment of divine wisdom on the part of the disciple.

“By hearing comes the truthfulness,
Contentedness and wisdom
And purification of bathing in the water of
Sixty/eight holy places, is attained by it.” * 31

But the mere hearing of knowledge is not sufficient. Knowledge to be properly assimilated must be believed, accepted and reflected upon and assimilated. It is through reflective meditation and assimilation that awareness of mind and intellect are fashioned and sharpened. The seeker is able to realize the true nature of reality and avoid the wrong path. Guru Amar Dass refers to this discriminatory power as vivek-budhi,*32 discriminating intellect. Guru Nanak says that a man of reflection and assimilation receives great honour. He realizes knowledge and becomes a benefactor of humanity. “Logical reflection and disciplined meditation awakens higher consciousness and wisdom in man and then he is able to perceive true wisdom of entire creation.”

“The importance of mannan is beyond description
With mannan, the mind and intellect are awakened,
With mannan, the significance of all regions is perceived,
With mannan, the disciple of the Guru is liberated and gets others liberated.” * 33

Mere intellectual development without the development of character, learning without piety, proficiency in the sacred lore with a deficiency in practice may pervert the very goal of studentship. Ethical conduct is the basis of spiritual life. Truth is high but higher still is truthful living. There can be no worship without good actions. According to Guru Nanak the mark of an educated person is that he contemplates upon the higher values of life.

“He alone is a wise man,
Who gains practical enlightenment of life,
Through meditation upon the divine virtues.” * 34

For moral and spiritual discipline, the Gurus want their disciples to overcome evil impulses and vices like Kam (Concupiscence), Krodh (anger), Lobh (Covetousness), Moh (attachment) and Ahnkar (pride). These are called the thieves and burglars which continuously steal away all the merit. Lust, wrath and avarice is the three-fold way to hell. “Attachment leads to desire, desire to anger, anger to delusion, delusion to confused memory and confused memory to destruction of reason”, * 35 says Gita.

If the disciple overcomes these evils, he can then discipline the mind. He can slay these five thieves of desire through the Guru's word. He can fight with them armed with the sword of wisdom.

"If the disciple overcomes his lust and wrath and I-amness
And slays the five thieves (of desire) through the Guru's word,
And struggles with the mind, armed with the sword of wisdom,
His desire merges in the mind, from where it issued forth." * 36

The disciple is not to run away from these impulses but he is to move among the sense objects with senses self-restrained. He is to sublimate his passions by substituting virtues and higher values of life for them. And these virtues like his faithful friends will help him to overcome these vices.

For the mental and spiritual discipline of their disciples, the Gurus have laid down certain codes of conduct. In 'Sidhgoshti' Guru Nanak gives six simple points of code of conduct for building character and disciplining the mind of the disciple. The disciple should not falter on seeing the riches and beauty of other persons. He should observe temperance in food and sleep. He should eat little and sleep little. The hunger of mind should be satiated and it can be done only by disciplining the mind with Name. Next, the disciple should deal in truth and shun falsehood. He should seek the Guru's grace in the form of holy word i.e. Gur Shabad. He should lead life like a lotus flower or a duck which floats carefree in water. He should be a servant of humanity and share his earnings with the needy and the poor. Bhai Gurdas has very beautifully described this aspect of his personality.

"His hands are busy helping the needy,
His hands are busy comforting the weary,
His hands are busy serving the lowly,
His hands are busy washing their feet,
Magnanimous, tolerant and serene,
He lives in the service of humanity." * 37

At the time of famous Baptismal ceremony, Guru Gobind Singh asked his disciples to take certain vows of discipline and wear five symbols which are Kes (unshorn hair), Kada (the steel bangle), Kangha (the comb), Kacha (shorts or breeches), Kirpan (sword). These symbols are extremely symbolic and have got disciplinary value. They form a part of disciple's moral discipline. These symbols are a constant training in loyalty to the Guru. They link him with the Guru "This feeling of incorporation with the Guru makes the Sikh strong beyond his ordinary power and in times of emergency comes to his rescue. Bhai Joga Singh is just a case in point. And yet in a moment of weakness this paragon of Sikh purity was going to fall at the door of a public women at Hoshiarpur. Who saved him in that emergency? It was the vision of

Guru Gobind Singh re-establishing the personal contact by pointing out to the symbols worn on his body and reminding him that he was carved in the Guru's own image." * 38

From the history of the Sikhs in the past as well as in the present, it is quite evident how efficiently these baptismal forms, with the accompanying vows of purity, love and service have aided them in keeping themselves united and their ideals unsullied even in the times of the greatest trials. *39

Discussing the concept of discipline of Guru Nanak McLeod gives six steps for the cultivation of spiritual discipline on the part of a disciple. * 40

They are interior religion, loving devotion, Nam, Simran, the concomitant results, the ascent, the ultimate. The life of the disciple becomes spiritually fully disciplined by following these steps. True religion is to be found not in external practices but in the inward discipline of love, faith, mercy and humility expressed in righteous and compassionate deeds and in the upholding of all that is true. religion is inward and its basic expression is the loving devotion for the Formless Lord. It is through the singing of his praises that the disciple finds a place in the Lord's court. Nam Simran helps in cleansing the mind defiled by sins and evil impulses. 'If the mind be defiled by sin it is cleansed with love of the Name.' * 41 Repeating the (Name) of the true Lord means engrafting (Him) in the 'man' (mind). * 42

This meditation on the nature and qualities of God is the core of Guru Nanak's religious discipline. The mind (man) cleansed of ego (Haumai) and purged of evil passions, purified and disciplined by meditation and Nam Simran ceases to be disciple's enemy and is transformed instead into his ally.

To be educated fully the educand must pass through the five grades of spiritual journey which are Dharam Khand (the realm of perceptual truth), Gyan Khand (the realm of perceptual truth), Saram Khand (the realm of action or divine grace), Sach Khand (the realm of divine truth). *43 The disciple has to pass through these realms to become fully accomplished. It is the path of the knowledge, action and devotion – all the three put together. This blend of gyan (knowledge) karam (action) and bhakti (devotion) leads to balanced spiritual development. Then the disciple reaches the Ultimate, the abode of the Formless Lord and is united with him. And it is condition of peace, of consummate joy and perfect tranquility, a condition transcending all human telling.

5. Daily Routine

For the fullest development of the personality of the disciple, Gurus recommended a special daily routine that leads to a disciplined way of life. The disciple travelling on the road to perfection has to spend his day in the planned manner. He does not

lead the life of an ascetic and undergo penances like the ancient Indian disciple. * 44 He participates actively in the daily activities of life. But this partaking has to be in a disciplined way. He is never unmindful of higher values of life. Guru Ram Dass lays down the daily routine of a disciple in these words:-

"He who deems himself a Sikh of the true Guru
Should rise early morning and contemplate the Name.
In the early hours of the morning he should rise and bathe
And cleanse his soul in a tank of nectar,
As he repeats the Name the Guru taught him.
Thus he washes away the sins of his soul
Then at dawn he should sing the hymns of the Guru
And throughout all the busyness of the day
He should hold in his heart the Name.
He who repeats the Name with every breath
Such a Sikh is indeed dear to the Guru.
The Sikh that is indeed dear to the Guru.
The Sikh that wins the favour of the Lord.
Has received the gift of the Lord's Name from the Guru.
Nanak seeks to kiss the dust under the feet of such a Sikh
Who utters the Name and inspires others to do so." * 45

Bhai Gurdas also enumerates the following daily activities of a disciple.

"A disciple gets up early and takes bath. After reading Guru's words, he goes to Dharamsala. There he sits in the holy congregation and intently listens to Gurbani with a devout heart. He renders service to his fellow-beings indiscriminately. He earns his livelihood in a righteous way and shares his food with others. He rather feeds others first but himself takes what is left over. At sun set he again attends to his prayers at the Dharamsala." * 46 The same daily routine with recitation of Rehras in the evening and Kirtan Sohila at bed-time is prescribed for a disciple in almost every Rahitnama or code of conduct. The disciple is thus given a simple and well-planned schedule of activities.

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1. M 1, Rag Asa, A.G.P. 465.
 2. Guru Gobind Singh's "Tankahnama" included in Bhai Khan Singh's "Gurmat Sudhakar", Language Deptt., Punjab, 1970, P. 267.
 3. Niharranjan Ray, Sikh Gurus and Sikh Society, P. 117.
 4. Op. cit. McLeod, PP. 207-08.
 5. M 1, Japji, A.G.P. 1.
 6. M 1, Asa-di-war, A.G.P. 466.

7. Op. cit. Sher Singh, Social and Political Philosophy of Guru Gobind Singh, P. 128.
8. M III, Quoted by Gurbachan Singh Talib, Bani of Shri Guru Amar Dass, Sterling Publishers Pvt Ltd. New Delhi, 1979, P. 97.
9. Ibid, P. 18.
10. M1, Japji A.G.P. 6.
11. M 1, Sidhghost, A.G.P. 941.
12. M 1, Rag Gauri, A.G.P. 151.
13. M 1, Asa-di-var, P. 464.
14. M 1, Sidhghost, A.G.P. 943.
15. M 1, Asa-di-Var, A.G.P. 465.
16. M 1, Rag Asa, A.G.P. 463.
17. Op. cit. Vir Singh (ed), Puratan Janam Sakhi, PP. 176, 178.
18. Macauliffe, Life of Guru Angad, Vol. II, P. 9.
19. Trumpp. Adi Granth, P. LXXVII.
20. Guru Nanak Salok Vara-The_Vadikh, A.G.P. 1412.
21. Guru Ram Dass Quoted by Macauliffe, P. 325.
22. Op. cit. Keay, P. 24.
23. Gotam 'Dharam Sutra', 2/46.
24. Op. cit. Cenkner, P. 112.
25. M IV, Rag Asa, A.G.P. 444
26. Op. cit. Bhai Gurdas, Var 3/11, 9/16, 13/1, 15/16.
27. Panchtantra 1/21.
28. M 1, Sri Rag, A.G.P. 16.
29. Op. cit. Keay, PP 25-26.
30. Shuk-Rahas-Upnishad Part III Canto XIII.
31. M 1, Japji, A.G., P. 3
32. Op. cit. Avtar Singh, Ethics of the Sikhs, P. 40.
33. M 1, Japji, A.G.P. 3
34. M 1, Dakhni Onkar, A.G., P. 931.
35. Gita Chapter 11, Canto 62-63.
36. M 1, Maru Sohila, A.G., P. 1022.
37. Bhai Gurdas, Warren, Translated by Trilochan Singh, Sikh Review, April, 1959, P. 13
38. Teja Singh, Essays in Sikhism, Lahore, Sikh University Press, 1944, P. 55.
39. Ibid, P. 63.
40. Op. cit, McLeod, PP. 207-226.
41. M 1, Japji, A.G., P. 4.
42. M 1, Vadhamsu Chhant A.G.P. 567.
43. (a) M 1, Japji, A.G.P, 7-8
 (b) Sher Singh, Social and Political Philosophy of Guru Gobind Singh, PP. 149-159.
 (c) S.S Kohli, A Critical Study of Adi Granth, PP. 367-68

44. Veda Mehta, Education in Ancient India, Arya Book Depot, New Delhi, 1964. PP. 68-73.
45. M IV, Rag Gauri, A.G., P. 305-306.
46. Bhai Gurdas, Var, 3/40.

CHAPTER X

LEARNING AND EVALUATION

The Gurus adopted different methods of teaching for teaching adults and children. Methods of teaching for children were more of formal nature and those of adults of informal. The same is true of the evaluation techniques. The adult disciples were tested in an informal manner, in actual life situations. While the children at schools were tested and evaluated in more or less formal manner.

1. Learning and Evaluation of Children

The methods of teaching or learning and of evaluation were ancient and traditional as it is evident in the education of Guru Nanak Dev Ji as described by Macauliffe. * 1 Learning at the early stage as explained earlier consisted in three skills – writing, reading and recitation. Writing began with the knowledge, recognition and memorizing of letters which were first named then observed, traced, imitated and practiced on a flat wooden palette one foot long and over half a foot wide, called 'takhti'. In the second stage, the consonants were combined with vowels and written down as well as chanted loudly. In the third stage came words, familiar enough like names, easy and simple to write. Lastly came transcription of orally learnt well-known lines of a religious text. The teachers correction in this triple process of learning was indirectly an evaluation concurrent with it.

Reading, writing and recitation were, thus, the three primary skills which a teacher tested. The learner was asked to read out from the text, to transcribe from the text, to write from memory and to recite with correct pronunciation and intonation. The errors were pointed out and the learner was asked to put in more practice so that he might demonstrate these skills without errors. Practice does not always lead to perfection but it can lead to satisfactory performance.

The method of teaching was mostly individual. Correspondingly, the method of evaluation was also individual. There were no dates of admission as in the present system which is public and open to children of all communities. Education was, the, admission was open in all seasons, in all months. The private schools were often housed in places of religious worship and run by priests during their spare hours. When a student's performance was satisfactory or good in a particular skill, he was told so and encouraged to devote more time to the skills in which he was not up to the mark. This continued until the teacher was satisfied. If the student did not make any progress, in spite of corrections made, practice done and chances given, his parents were advised to engage him in some other activity.

There was no declaration of results as it is done in our times. 'Pass and Fail' are English terms borrowed along with the system of education. Then the syllabus consisted in the study of particular books. When a student had finished a book he was tested in the text. He was asked to recite certain passages orally. Next, he was asked to explain the meanings of certain passages. There was no test in dictation or transcription, at a later stage. If a student's performance was upto the mark, he was permitted to take up the study of next book in the higher category, otherwise he was advised to revise the same book for another test. When, however, a student took a long time to give a satisfactory performance, his education discontinued.

It is evident that tests used to be oral. There was no such method as a written test with a question paper. No answer books were supplied to answer questions therein. It is, further, evident that a student was tested in one book at a time after a particular period during which he could study it with the help of his teacher from day to day. When a young man or a girl had completed his or her education, he or she was not asked as one is asked today, what standard or class he had passed, nor what certificates or diploma he possessed. On the other hand, he was asked what book he had read and at whose feet ? These two considerations were the sole measure of his ability. That indicated the standard of his achievement.

Lastly, the test was not measured quantitatively. There was no system of maximum or minimum marks. A written or oral performance did not carry any marks, out of which the examiner awarded him pass marks, out of which the examiner awarded him pass marks or pulled him down or gave him second or third grade or division. The examiner was the teacher himself, or in the terminology of education of today the internal examiner was the sole examiner who had taught the student himself and knew of his ability or mental caliber. He was the judge for he had measured his pupils ability from the way he had picked up, he had recited from memory and the period taken to commit a particular text to memory. The teacher already possessed some idea of his pupil's capacity to learn, to assimilate and to reproduce. He had also observed from month to month what progress the pupil had been making in his studies. The teacher could be the best judge of his student's achievement. Even though the method of judgment was subjective, it was based upon observations spread over a considerable period of time. Those were not the days of corruption or recommendation or external pressure, the examiners of these days are exposed to. It can be safely held that the teacher as examiner was above suspicion and maintained the integrity of his profession. His opinion about his pupil's achievements was respected and valued.

In music schools housed in a place like a Ragi bunga (a school for musicians) situated on the premises of the holy temple in Amritsar, stress was laid on practical skill and practice (sadhana). Theory was a handmaid to practice. It consisted in the knowledge of the kinds, and varieties of rags, their moods, and timings. In the music schools only those students were taken who had learnt the sacred hymns by heart. They were taught how to sing them if

they possessed a natural talent for music. Their skill was tested in a congregation where they were asked to give a demonstration of their skill.

2. Learning and Evaluation of Adults

The Gurus wanted their disciples to learn the qualities of devotion and dedication to God, love and service of humanity, nobility of character, dignity of labour, implicit obedience and service of the Guru and purity of life. And they tested the development of these ideals in their Skills from time to time. Tradition affirms that towards the close of his life, Guru Nanak began a systematic trial of his followers. His object, no doubt, was to discover the person who was qualified, above all others, to bear the burden of Guruship after his death. We are told that the trial generally took the form of apparently unreasonable commands at unreasonable times by the Guru over those around him. * 2

Macauliffe describes in detail the trials of devotion of his disciples, the Guru made to select his successor. One winter's night as heavy rain was falling, a part of the wall of his house fell in. The Guru said it must be repaired at once. His sons refused to do so on such a rainy night. Lehna (afterwards named 'Angad'), being the essence of obedience, at once, began to build the wall. After some time, the Guru came to inspect the work, expressed his dissatisfaction and asked Lehna to pull it down and begin again from the beginning. This was repeated several times. Guru's sons told Lehna that he was a fool to obey such unreasonable orders. In all humility, Lehna replied that a servant should make his hands useful by doing his master's work. * 3

On another occasion near midnight, the Guru asked his sons to wash his soiled clothes. They refused to wash them at such an hour. But 'Angad' at once went out to wash the clothes. * 4 Once when the Guru was taking bath, the cup he used slipped from his hand and fell into a deep sink. The Guru asked his sons to bring it out for him quickly. They replied that the sink was very deep and dirty and they would get somebody to dive for it. Upon this the Guru told 'Angad' to restore him his cup. Angad obeyed him at once. * 5

Implicit obedience, unconditional surrender, reverence and faith in the Guru were the chief characteristics of Lehna's character. While serving the Guru he never thought of his comforts or prestige and regarded himself as his humble slave. He did not mind lifting the wet bundle of grass with his new clothes on. He even became ready to eat a corpse. * 6 As gold is tried in a heated crucible so did Guru Nanak try Lehna and found him pure and altogether fit for the exalted office of the Guru. * 7 What the Guru wanted to teach Lehna were the ideals of devotion, surrender, service and humility. He says openly:

"If thou desire to play at love with me
Come my way with thy head in the palm of thy hand.

Put thy feet on this road
Give thy head and care not others' opinion." * 8

Here is a demand for complete self-sacrifice. The 'Five Beloveds' literally walked forward to Guru Gobind Singh at Keshgarh with their heads in the palm of their hands. In the same strain, Guru Amar Dass asked his disciples to entrust body, soul and wealth to the Guru and obey his orders if they really wanted to succeed. Guru Ram Dass says:

"Sikhs of the Guru and friends walk in God's way.
Faithfully obey what the Guru preacheth,
Hear servants of God and brethren,
Serve the Guru very promptly.
Tie up service to the Guru as thy
Travelling expenses of the journey to God.
Think not of today or tomorrow." * 9

This is how Guru Nanak tested and evaluated the worth of Lehna and was touched by his devotion and service. Paying him a compliment he said:

"You have pleased me by your devoted service. Between you and me there is now no difference. None of my Sikhs have such faith and confidence in me as you have, and, therefore, I love you most of all. You are verily 'Angad', a part of my body. * 10 Saying so he embraced him and raised him to the exalted office of the Guru. Lehna won the Guruship through humility, service and the spirit of self-sacrifice. Satta and Balwanda have described this incidence in their coronation Ode (Tikke-di-war) like this:-

"Because of the devoted Service of Lehna
Nanak proclaimed him As his successor
With unstinted devotion he served Guru Nanak
And followed the arduous path
Leading to union with God
Guru Nanak's sons did not obey him
They turned their backs to the True Guru." * 11

The Guru tested and found the best man to succeed him. This testing was impartial and above board. This evaluation of his disciple's qualities of the character was done in real life situations in an informal manner without any awareness on the part of the person being tested.

Coming next to the nomination of Amar Dass to the Guruship, we are again introduced to several incidents of the type narrated above. It was, again, a dark rainy night. A cold wind blew, lightening flashed and every human being was glad to find shelter in his house and go to sleep. On such a night as this, the Guru called out for water. No body heeded him. Though being old Amar Dass came forward and cheerfully volunteered to go to the river to bring water for his master. * 12

Guru Amar Dass was old but he had great sense and strength of devotion and service for his Guru. His daily duties were to rise at Goindwal, a watch before day and proceed to the river Bias to take water to Khadur for the Guru to bathe with. Then he fetched water for the Guru's kitchen, scrubbed the cooking utensils and brought firewood from the forest. He attended the morning and evening congregations and listened to Gurbani. After shampooing the Guru and putting him to rest at night, he returned to Goindwal. * 13

According to the Sikh tradition, the sine-qua-non of eligibility to the Guruship or in other words the essential requisite of an ideal Sikh was implicit surrender to the Guru. 'Sacrificium intellectus' as Trumpp would call it. * 14 Seeing this quality of 'Sacrificium intellectus' in Guru Amar Dass, Guru Angad, inspite of the opposition of his own relatives, conferred the Guruship on Amar Dass, who had proved to be the most worthy of this high dignity. The office of Guruship was the reward of humility, devotion and service and Guru Amar Dass had obtained the high position as the reward of his ceaseless toil, manifold virtues and piety.

In the case of Ram Dass, tradition shifts its ground. But the old point is not abandoned. It is stressed as before and we are told that 'Jetha performed such unremitting services, day and night that he allowed himself no repose of mind and body. * 15

For Guru Amar Dass the criterion for the selection of the best disciple was, "He who hath the greater faith, devotion, humility and obedience is the more deserving." He found Jetha (Ram Dass) the incarnation of devotion, religious piety and sacrifice and selected him as his heir ignoring the claim of his own sons and other sons-in-law." * 16

After Guru Ram Dass, the Guruship was made hereditary on the asking of Bibi Bhani, Guru Amar Dass's daughter. But it is remarkable that even when succession became hereditary, the best available among the members of the family were appointed to the seat of Guruship. Even a child of eight, Guru Harkrishan made the best choice passing over his own brother and uncles. * 17

This is how the Gurus tested their succeeding Gurus in particular and Sikhs in general. Out of a large gathering assembled at Anandpur Sahib on the occasion of Baisakhi, Guru Gobind Rai was able to select only five Sikhs who were willing to be sacrificed. Here also the basis of selection was the qualities of sacrifice and implicit obedience to the call of the

Guru. The example of such trials on the part of the Gurus can be multiplied. This is how the Gurus tested their adult disciples in actual situations in an informal way in a surprising manner.

1. Op. cit. Macauliffe, Vol 1, P. 3.
2. Mukerjee, Evaluation of Khalsa, Vol 1, P. 216.
3. Op. cit. Macauliffe, Vol 11, P. 6.
4. Ibid, P. 10.
5. Ibid, P. 11.
6. Op. cit. Mukerjee, Vol. 1, P. 218.
7. Op. cit. Macauliffe, Vol. 11, P. 8.
8. M 1, Salok Vara-The Vadikh, A.G., P. 1412.
9. M IV, Quoted by Macauliffe, Vol. 11, P. 325.
10. Op. cit. Macauliffe, Vol 11, P. 9.
11. Satta Balwanda, Ramkali-ki-war, A.G., P. 966-67
12. Op. cit. Macauliffe, Vol. 11, PP. 42-43.
13. Ibid, Vol. 11, P. 35.
14. Op. cit., Trumpp, The Adi Granth, Introduction, P. 1 XXVII
15. Op. cit. Macauliffe, Vol. 11, P. 146.
16. Ibid, Vol. 11. 142-145.
17. Op. cit. Narang, Transformation of Sikhism, P. 68 (FN).

CHAPTER XI

EDUCATION OF GIRLS

Guru Nanak's recognition of the social status of women is a pleasant and meaningful departure from medieval ideas. He offered women a new status of high respect and dignity as mothers and partners of life. He says:

"All women and men are born of women,
It is woman indeed who nurtures man to mankind.
It is with woman's friendship
That man bears the burden of family and domestic life easily.
Man cannot become a householder in the real
sense without the association of woman.
Therefore, he seeks a woman as his second wife
when his first wife passes away.
It is through women that men perform
Duties and responsibilities of their homes successfully.
Thus, how can we speak ill of women who give birth to great men.
A woman also creates a woman
No man or woman can live normally without the society of woman.
That it is God and God, the Creator alone who is independent of woman
Because he is unborn.
Verily, Society, the home and the country
Where there a true woman of divine virtues is honoured
Becomes dignified and exalted in the court of True God." * 1

This is a worthy tribute to the role of women in the preservation and proper functioning of society. All the Gurus worked for the social and spiritual emancipation of woman. The third Guru, Amar Dass abolished pardah and the custom of the seclusion of women among the Sikhs and allowed his daughter to choose her husband. On her plea he even conceded her the right of Guruship as hereditary in her family. * 2 He favoured widow-marriage. He raised his voice against the inhuman custom of sati and forbade it among the Sikhs.

"A sati is not she, who burns herself on the pyre of her spouse.
A sati is she who dies with the sheer shock of separation.
A sati is one who lives contented
And embellishes herself with good conduct.
And serves her Lord with all her heart,
And cherishes Him ever." * 3

Guru Hargobind regarded woman as the conscience of man. * 4 Guru Gobind Singh further strengthened the position of woman by extending the right of baptism to her. She was permitted to keep the five emblems. As the Gurus believed in equality of sexes, she could take nectar from the same bowl along with men.

The Gurus did not believe in the segregation of sexes. Woman was not regarded in any way inferior to man. She came to be regarded as one half of the complete personality of man and was entitled to share his secular and spiritual knowledge equally with him. She was considered indispensable for his spiritual advancement. *5 Both by precept and example, the Sikh women came into their own and attained religious and social equality with men. At home, in the congregation, in professional equipment and later on in the times of Guru Gobind Singh even in the battle field, women vied with men in the service of the Guru. The example of Mai Bhago is typical. She was a great woman who brought defectors back to the Guru and inspired them to fight bravely at the battle of Mukatsar. * 6

The Gurus have got great reverence for women. Being mystic poets, they even worship God in the form of women taking it for granted that devotion and dedication of an Indian woman for her husband is unique in the world. All the Gurus were householders and they never regarded woman as hindrance in the path of spiritual journey. In fact they thought woman sweetened life in all her aspects. They felt that as a wife she shared the joys and sorrows of her husband. Guru Nanak's wife Mata Sulkhani, co-operated with him fully and waited patiently for years together while he took long journeys for the spread of his mission. Mata Gujri, Guru Teg Bahadur's wife, served him with fullest devotion for several years while he practised austerities and meditated upon the name of God. The Gurus experienced that as a mother woman deserved all the respect. Guru Gobind Singh had all the reverence and respect for his mother and always sought her guidance. She was a great source of moral support to him. The Gurus felt that as a sister she sweetened life. Nanaki loved Nanak immensely. As a daughter she added charm to the family and spread fragrance around. Bibi Bhani served her aged father Guru Amar Dass with such tender love that he bestowed the right of Guruship as hereditary in her family.

Women Education

The Gurus regarded literacy essential for the redemption of woman. The doors of education were thrown open to her. With lapse of time, in the sphere of education too, she did not remain behind man. The subject of literacy among the Sikhs has already been dealt with. It also holds good in the case of women. It was the duty of every Sikh to read or hear the word of the Gurus. Literacy as a means of religious learning was enjoined upon every Sikh as an article of new faith. It came to be regarded as the first duty of every man or woman, child or adult to read Gurmukhi and learn Gurbani. On one occasion Guru Gobind Singh asked his men

and women followers to sit together and hold divine discourses. * 7 As the women equally participated in Sikh congregations at Dharamsalas, we can assume that they must have been equal partners in the schools attached to the 'Dharamsalas'. Educational facilities were offered to them to learn language, literature, religious scriptures and music.

Educational Aims

Educational aims recommended for men were equally considered good for women. On the basis of various hymns in Guru Granth Sahib and the general attitude of the Gurus towards women, we can form an idea of the ideal of women education on the part of the Gurus.

1. Women and God Realization

As already discussed the ultimate aim of education of the Gurus is God-realization. This aim of education holds good in the case of women also. The Gurus have sung many songs in which they have emphasized this aim of education and life on the part of women.

"If the woman devotee wears the ring of Madhusudan (Lord Krishna)
And puts on the silken clothes of the supreme Lord's culture.
And if she makes patience the parting of her hair
And applies the collyrium of enlightenment,
Which is imbued with the colour of the sword of Lord Krishna,
And if she burns the lamp of divinity in the temple of her mind.
And converts her very personality into the couch of consummation,
Then the Lord of wisdom will surely share her bridal bed,
And enjoy the consummation of spiritual union with her
By changing her sex into His devotional affection." * 8

The Guru has also enumerated the qualities by cultivating which self-realization is possible.

"O Sister, make humility your education,
Forgiveness, your art of behavior,
Valuable and creative gems of Nam,
The conquering formula of your tongue,
And put on the garb of divine culture,
On your body, mind and soul,
Then you will certainly win the heart of the
Universal Husband permanently." * 9

2. Women and Character-Building

The Gurus have sung the glories of a virtuous bride. It is with the development of virtues in life that the Lord is won:

“Ask the bride by what merits did you please your spouse so well ?
(says she) I was content with Him, was in peace
Was bedecked beautifully and spoke honey to Him.” * 10

She is advised to cultivate love, obedience, self-sacrifice, grace, tenderness and refinement. A virtuous woman scatters virtues around and makes life worth living:

“The woman of merit scatters merit
The one without merit writhes in distress,
If she wants to seek her Lord (let her know that)
He would n't be met through falsehood.” * 11

Sweetness, humility, love and devotion endear her to her Lord. While the evil ways make her cry and bewail.

“The Gurmukh (God-centred) woman enjoys eternally the bliss of wedded life.
She keeps the Lord ever in her heart.
She speaks sweetly and is humble in her ways
and enjoys the company of her Lord.
That bride alone is praise-worthy,
Who loves her Lord intensely.” * 12

The five impulses need to be conquered and sublimated on her part also:

“If the bride obliterates lust, wrath, avarice and infatuation,
And the false nature born of ego
And becoming humble serves her Lord
Then she is the beloved of her spouse.” * 13

Guru Nanak describes two kinds of women, the bride without merit (kuchaji) and the bride with merit (suchaji). The deeds of bride without merit are black. Her mind is unclean, without merit and virtues. She cannot win the heart of her husband. Bride with merit (suchaji) is of good conduct. She has disciplined herself. She possesses truth and is pleasing to her family. She has grace and is ever blessed. She is imbued with the love of her Lord. She is a woman in the true sense. She cannot bear separation from her husband. She does not like even jewels and fine clothes on her body in his absence. She dies of separation from her

beloved. She is truly wedded and loves her husband more than any amount of wealth in the world." * 14 That is why the effort of every bride is to become bride with merit (suchaji) with the cultivation of more and more virtues.

"I embellish myself with truth, contentment, compassion and righteousness,
So that my bridehood becomes fruitful
And I become endeared to my Lord." * 15

3. Women and Household Duties

The Gurus brought women to the Dharamsalas and encouraged them to take part in its social, moral, religious, cultural and educational activities. They made them to work in free community kitchens along with men. Though the Gurus brought woman to temples out of the four walls of the home, still they regarded perfection in household affairs the main duty of a woman. They had the ideal of a faithful, happy, wedded life before them. Guru Hargobind's advice to her daughter at the time of her marriage was "My beloved daughter in all worldly matters obey and wait upon thy mother-in-law and thy husband." *16. A woman must be capable of keeping her household clean and comfortable and running it smoothly. She should be self-denying, sacrificing and a source of peace and happiness to her family. In love and devotion she is to be one with her husband.

"It is vain to live merely together as husband and wife.
They alone form a true pair
Who become one soul in two bodies." * 17

Besides loving her life companion devotedly, the beauty of a woman lies in managing her household affairs tastefully.

"If one embroiders the skirt (of God's Love) for oneself
Then alone is one a true bride.
Yea, if one arranges well one's household and tastes not vice,
One is then beloved of one's spouse." * 18

She entertains her husband by preparing many delicacies for him.

"As in the house of the groom is the devoted bride.
Who longs for him with utter devotion
And she prepares many delicacies for her man
Sweet and sour and all.
And devotees of God too are dedicated likewise to the Lord's praise.
And are attuned to His name." * 19

A cultural bride of such an amiable disposition builds a happy home. She is a well-adjusted woman with all the family members. The home where she abides becomes a veritable heaven on earth. After having her, her life companion considers himself the most fortunate person on earth. The Gurus have sung the glory of such a bride in these words:-

"I have married the bride of pure deeds by the Guru's grace,
Who looks beautiful in worship as in the worldly deeds.
She is blest with thirty-two kinds of embellishments.
Truth is her family.
She is obedient, wise and charming,
Yea, my Eternal Groom has fulfilled me in every way.
My hopes and desires are now both content
The brother-in-laws and sister-in-laws
Are all satisfied with her behavior.
In the family, she is now considered supreme.
She is well-instructed and disciplined.
All family members seek her guidance.
Blessed is the home in which she abides.
She passes her days ever in bliss." * 20

In these lines Guru Arjan has drawn the portrait of an ideal woman who with her various accomplishments is able to build a happy home. She is blest with thirty two kinds of embellishments namely, beauty, cleanliness, modesty, humility, cheerfulness, concord, observance of religion, cleverness, knowledge, service, compassion, truth, dedicated love of the husband, purity of mind, patience, frugality, beneficence, sobriety, chivalry, active habits, house decoration, respect of elders on the one hand and proficiency in music, poetry, painting, domestic science, embroidery, respectful attention of guests and up-bringing of children on the other. * 21 The development of these virtues can be the cherished aim of any good system of education. The Guru blesses such a virtuous woman with the above qualities to live happily at her parents home as well with her in-laws.

"In your parents' home, you serve the Lord,
And you live happily at your in-laws home.
Through Guru's guidance you learn right conduct and behavior
And you will never be in pain." * 22

4. Women and Social and Civic Efficiency

The Gurus worked for the liberation of women from the crippling social restraints of those days. They regarded her as man's helpmate in every walk of life. She was made conscious of her dignity and worth as a woman in society by these praises of the Guru.

"Why call her bad who gives birth to great men"? and "the society where women are honoured and respected becomes dignified and exalted in the eyes of God." * 23

To train woman as a worthy member of society, the Gurus made her to participate in social, religious, cultural, educational and political activities. She was given freedom of action, thought and speech. To develop civic virtues like dignity of labour, disinterested service of community, cooperation and liberal outlook, she was encouraged to participate freely in congregational prayers and community kitchens. She was expected to stand upon her own feet and be able to protect her own honour. To remove her ingrained inferiority complex and awaken her sense of dignity she was allowed to wear five emblems along with man and she could take nectar from the same bowl along with man. The wearing of sword must have made her fearless and courageous and enabled her to protect her honour in time of emergency as is clear from the examples of Mai Bhago and Sharvan Kaur. Sharvan Kaur was a brave woman who at mid of night had the courage to perform the last rites of Guru Gobind Singh's dead sons and other dead brave soldiers at Chamkaur Sahib and fought with the enemies. * 24

As a result of these educational aims of the Gurus, woman no longer remained confined to the four walls of the home and came forward like Mata Gujri (wife of Guru Teg Bahadur, mother of Guru Gobind Singh) and Mata Sahib Devan (wife of Guru Gobind Singh) to contribute her mite to the building of a new social order of the Guru's dream.

Education of Girls

The schools attached with the Dharamsalas came to be known as Gurmukhi schools in later period. As the Gurus did not believe in the segregation of sexes, boys and girls came to be educated together at the primary stage in those schools. Bhai Bishan Singh and Bhai Narain Singh bear testimony to the vogue of co-education at the early stage in Dharamsalas where little boys and girls learnt 3 R's together at the feet of Grunthee (priest). Mr Darling's testimony is also to the same effect. In the Rusticus Loquitur he makes mention of some Gurdwaras in which arrangement for the teaching of girls also existed. * 25 Leitner also gives various instances of the Gurmukhi Schools where girls were educated along with boys. "A Sikh woman could not claim the title and privilege of a "learner" unless she was able to read the holy Granth. The knowledge, therefore, of her religious duties, imparted in numerous little treatises, and in some of the sacred texts and illustrated by stories of Gurus and saints, was deemed to be sufficient for one who had the duties of a household to perform, which, besides sewing and cooking, included the art of embroidery, and the keeping of accounts in an elementary form." * 26

Of course, this education of the girls was of elementary level. They were generally instructed by their family priest. Their education consisted of reading and writing

Gurmukhi and study of the Holy Granth. Elementary arithmetic was taught to keep household accounts. Cooking, sewing, embroidery, gardening, spinning, weaving, plastering the floors and walls of the house were some other activities. The manual labour at the home and in the field lent strength, grace and agility to their bodies. The Punjabi women of those times were remarkable for their physical constitution and agricultural industry.

At the time of annexation of the Punjab female education among the Sikhs was found within all parts of the Punjab. And for long time to come it went on without the aid of the government.

Education of Women

Education of adults differed from the education of children. Adults were taught informally in 'Dharamsalas' with the help of kirtan, katha, sadh-sangat, discussions, debates and by holding various informal programmes. As the women also attended these programmes, they got educated and enlightened by these methods. They could read the Holy Granth. They could lead the congregational singing with their sweet and melodious voice. It was Bibi Amro, the daughter of Guru Angad who by her devout and sweet recitation of Guru Nanak's hymns converted Amar Dass to the new faith. * 27

Participation in various informal programmes enabled women to learn various social virtues like dignity of labour, disinterested service, cooperation, liberal outlook free from the barriers of caste, creed and sex. Katha, kirtan, celebration of festivals discussions and debates added to her knowledge and widened her mental horizon. The devotional songs and heroic ballads inspired her to a life of action and sacrifice for the cause of Guru and community. These programmes at 'Dharamsalas' imparted her religious, moral, social and spiritual education. The hymns of the Gurus placed before her the ideals of womanhood, of pure and virtuous life by inculcating the qualities of purity, sweetness, modesty and humility in her life.

1. M 1, Rag Asa, A.G.P. 473.
2. Op. cit. Ahuja, P. 427.
3. M III, Rag Suhi, A.G.P. 787.
4. Op. cit. Ahuja. P. 427.
5. Bhai Gurdas, Warran, Var 5/16.
6. Harnam Dass, Guru Nanak Unique Liberator of Women Kind. The Sikh Review, Dec. 1969, Jan 1970, Calcutta. P. 100.
7. Op. cit. Macauliffe, Vol. V.P. 158.
8. M 1, Rag Asa, A.G., P. 359.
9. M 5, A.G., P. 1384.
10. M 1, Sri Rag, A.G.P. 17.

11. Ibid. P. 17.
12. M III, Sri Rag, A.G.P. 31.
13. M V, Rag Asa, A.G.P. 377.
14. M 1, Rag Suhi, A.G., PP. 762-63.
15. M V, Rag Bilawal, A.G., P. 812.
16. Op. cit. Macauliffe, Vol IV, P. 147.
17. M 111, Rag Suhi, A.G.P. 788.
18. M 1, Rag Basant, A.G., P. 1171.
19. M 111, Shalokas, P. 1413.
20. M 5, Rag Asa, A.G., P. 371.
21. Gopal Singh, Sri Guru Granth Sahib (Eng. Translation) Vol. 2, P. 362.
22. M 5, Sri Rag, A.G., P. 50.
23. M 1, Asa-di-war, A.G., P. 473.
24. Op. cit. Harnam Dass, P. 101.
25. Quoted by R.L Ahuja. The Education of the Girls at the time of Annexation, The Punjab Past and Present, Vol. VII-I, April, 1973, Patiala, Punjabi University, P. 74.
26. Op. cit. Leitner, P. 98.
27. Op. cit. Macauliffe, Vol 11, P. 31.

CHAPTER XII

RELEVANCE OF GURU'S EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY FOR OUR TIMES

The educational thinking of the Sikh Gurus has an element of abiding universal truth. Not only was it relevant when the Gurus expressed their thoughts first but it has also meaning and significance for our times.

We are caught up in a social maelstrom. There is crisis of values. Exploitation in the name of religion, lack of patriotism, casteism, social apathy, self aggrandizement, economic disparities, and corruption are just a few among the many social evils that afflict us to-day. Educational institutions which should normally promote social progress and help bring about a just social order have fallen a prey to the manipulations of the promoters of injustice, hatred and bondage of human spirit.

The educational ideas of the Gurus are as fresh and life-giving as ever. The concept, programme, and methodology of education envisaged by the Gurus have relevance for us. We can lessen the severity of our troubled times to a larger extent if we care to interpret the educational thinking of the Gurus correctly and learn from them as to how to direct our educational course.

Education with Spiritual and Religious Base

From times immemorial India has been a land of spiritual consciousness. Self-realization has always been prized as the aim of human life. Education should enable a student to realize his spiritual nature.

Like the ancient rishis the Gurus do not separate education from religion. "An educated man, a scholar or a seer is one who puts the garland of Ram Nam round his neck." * 1
A truly educated person is a religious person, pure in thought, word and deed.

These days, the separation of education from religion has brought a crisis of values not only in the field of education but also in other spheres of human activities. In the name of secularism people have grown allergic to religion. The result is frustration and unhappiness.

In order to make education a living force in the life of the individual it is necessary to provide it with moral and spiritual base. The Gurus philosophy of education, based on religious and moral foundations is thus of great significance to us in our present situation.

In the modern world man is fast heading towards materialism. He has become worshipper of mammon. For money, he may stoop to anything, like bribery, exploitation, theft, deception and even adulteration of food. The number of Malik Bhago's is daily on the increase. There is a danger that in this pursuit of wealth and industrialization we may neglect the spiritual values of life. The materialistic standards of values, the worship of wealth and power has to be replaced by a new set of values, spiritual balance and higher ideals.

Loss of moral values, character and discipline on the part of our students has not escaped the attention of our educationists. The Committee on Religious and Moral instruction, appointed by the Government of India in 1964, impressed upon all the desirability of providing religious and moral education in all educational institutions. The Committee does not favour the view that religious education be entirely left to the home and community where the rituals and outward forms of religion are usually emphasized and the young folk in such an atmosphere saturated with such ceremonials are bound to attach too much importance to this aspect of religion in the neglect of ethical teachings and spiritual values. * 2

The Committee is of the view that if the content of education is enriched with moral and spiritual values the purpose of education shall be very truly fulfilled. * 3

The Kothari Commission (1964-66) recommends in a very forceful language that educational system should emphasize the development of fundamental social, moral and spiritual values. * 4

Even in the west the importance of religious and moral education is being realized. According to Handerson, "The need for religion is as fundamental to man's nature as is the need for food. By precept and example, our students should remain or become convinced that lives without religion are lacking in an important respect, that man has spiritual needs and that any adequate philosophy of life does not ignore religion. * 5

In our present context, the Gurus' views on education, based on deep spiritual, moral and higher values of life can go a long way in moulding the character of the students. For the Gurus, real education should help in spiritual experience. "What use is that education", says Guru Nanak, "which does not help us to get out of our animal existence and which does not awaken the spiritual depths in man but on the other hand sharpens his intellect to become clever, selfish, sly and wicked." * 6

The Gurus are great moral teachers. For them truth is high but higher still is truthful living. True education should refine and strengthen our moral fiber. Otherwise it is better to be an unlettered saint than to be a wicked, haughty, selfish and self-willed scholar. It is better to be an ignorant virtuous man than to be a learned sinner. A person may read a large

number of books and acquire degrees but he will not be considered an educated person if he suffers from selfishness, greed and ego.

“An educated person is a fool
If he suffers from ego, greed and lust.” * 7

In this materialistic world these teachings of the Gurus are quite relevant and inspiring.

Education Based on Humanism

Humanism is a philosophy of which man is the centre and sanction. It believes in ‘Homo Mensura’, man is the measure of all things. It emphasizes that proper study of mankind is man. ‘Humanism means simply human-beingism, that is devotion to the interests of human beings, wherever they live and whatever their status. Humanism cannot tolerate discrimination against any people or nation as such. Current humanism reaffirms the spirit of cosmopolitanism, of international friendship and essential brotherhood of man.’ * 8

Viewed in this light the Gurus are great humanists. Their philosophy is of joyous service for the greatest good of all humanity. “A really educating person is one who does good to others.” * 9 Service of man is service of God. ‘He prayeth best who loveth best’ is the essence of their educational philosophy. The Gurus themselves devoted their lives practically to the service of suffering people. They are cosmopolitan in their outlook and to establish ties of friendship among various countries, Guru Nanak travelled far and wide to far off countries like Tibet, Afghanistan, China, Turkey, Egypt, Ceylon, etc.

The modern world is in the grip of narrow sectarianism, regionalism and fanaticism. Narrow loyalties have created disunity. Conflicts and wars entangle the world. Powerful nations threaten the weak ones. Man has made stupendous progress in the field of science and technology. He has already walked on the surface of moon. But he has not learnt to live peacefully on this earth. We, in India are not still out of the clutches of superstitions and narrowness of outlook. The divisive forces are swaying this land of ours and we are far from the ideal of fatherhood of God and brotherhood of man which our Gurus have preached.

Education is a great unifying force. Education based on humanistic values can certainly change the shape of things. The education of the Gurus conception is based on cosmopolitan outlook, brotherhood of man and fatherhood of God.

“All mankind is one as we all are the sons of same Great God.” There is no sectarian outlook, caste, creed or even sex in their education system. It is based on love, respect and mutual understanding. In fact they believe that man is the noblest work of God.

No one is low or inferior. He, Himself is abiding in man. To see God in man is the greatest virtue.

"All men are great and high,
None of them is low,
Because one God alone has created their personalities,
And one alone pervades them all." * 10

Even a sinner is not beyond redemption. The transformation of Sajjan Thug and Koda Rakshas underlines the great truth that in every one of us, there are good as well as evil tendencies and it is only when the good tendencies get encouragement through 'satsang' or through the magic touch of a great teacher that man projects an image of goodness and nobility. In every one of us, there is Dr. Jekyll and a Mr Hyde and it is job of education, through constant instruction, personal inspiration and the creation of a congenial environment to bring out the latent good in all of us. * 11

Man being the image of God is endowed with great potentialities. His personality should be fully developed to make this world a happy place to live in. Man has the potentialities to solve his own problems through reason, judgment and action. He can carve out his own destiny through his own efforts. What is needed is proper guidance and education. To achieve this end the Gurus advocate universal education. They carried on literacy drive to free the people of their country from the chains of ignorance. They opened dharamsalas to which elementary schools were attached. So the gates of these schools were thrown open to all, rich and poor, men and women. The advice of Guru Gobind Singh to an illiterate Sikh was, "It is necessary that you should read little or much so as to acquire understanding and to improve your mind. You shall thus learn the difference between good and evil and what you ought or ought not to do. The mind of him, who is uninstructed remains in blind ignorance."
*12

"Those people who are devoid of knowledge,
Fall an easy victim to deception of life
And are eaten up by the god of death." * 13

Purposeful and Functional Education

For the Gurus education stands for illumination. It should help to develop spiritual, intellectual, moral and physical faculties of the child. But today we find that education is becoming synonymous with book learning and passing of examinations. These days our curriculum has become subject-centred rather than child-centred. Undoubtedly, the educational institutions in India are devoting their entire energy to the teaching of subjects and they are little conscious of educating the personalities of individuals.

Great western educators like Dewey, Kilpatric and others have realized the futility of a subject-centred curriculum and have advocated an activity-centred educational programme. In India also, the educationists are emphasizing purposeful and functional education. The Gurus are opposed to bookish and theoretical education that does not challenge all the faculties of the child. They differentiate education from mere information. One may read innumerable books and still may not be a rightly educated person. Reading heaps of books without realization and understanding the knowledge gained is useless. It is just a burden on the mind.

"Talking of one's knowledge
And mere reading of scriptures is a load on the mind." * 14

Like the modern pragmatists, the Gurus do not believe in the disinterested pursuit of knowledge. They want to develop thinking, rational and practical minds. They do not want narrow Scholars but practical citizens. They want to develop thinking, rational and practical minds. They want that education which helps in day to day life. They tell the scholar that he may read thousand and thousand of books and stuff his brain with their information just for ego satisfaction but he cannot make his personality achieve self-fulfillment unless he realizes practically the knowledge he has gained and develop his contemplative power.

"One may read cartloads of books,
With caravan, loads of books to follow,
One may study shiploads of volumes,
And heap them pile on pile in his cellars.
One may read for years and years,
And spend every month of the year in reading only;
And thus read all one's life.
Right upto his last breath.
Of all things, contemplative life is really what matters,
All else is the fret and fever of the egoistic minds." * 15

The Gurus condemn the scholars of their time who were contented only with amassing knowledge for fruitless discussions, but did not realize the actual aim of life.

"The scholars study more and more to gain knowledge,
But they use it for vain discussion,
They do not use education,
For the realization of divine substance which is in them." * 16

That man alone is a man of wisdom, who gains self-knowledge through right reflection. Otherwise if one goes on reading and reading for its own sake without practical realization and application of knowledge gained, one worries one-self more and more.

"The more you write and study without
Practical realization of wisdom,
The more you worry yourself." * 17

Like the modern educationists the Gurus believe that education that enkindles the spark for quest in the child, provokes his thinking, sharpens his imagination and makes him a socially useful person is the right education.

"A person of real research
Becomes a creative man,
But a talkative one who indulges in mere prattle,
Destroys himself." * 18

For the Gurus true wisdom can be realized only through a life of action.

"Wisdom cannot be sought through prattle,
To describe its essence is also hard,
Those alone can gain wisdom,
Who through God's grace,
Lead the very practical life of Karam Yoga." * 19

How strikingly modern they appear in their approach !

Dedicated Teacher and Devoted Pupil

The Gurus offer a sublime concept of a religious teacher interested in his service. Education is a part of religious duty with him. Without caring for material considerations, rewards and returns he makes honest endeavours for the betterment of his pupil. His work is his mission. The teacher who works only for amassing wealth is not a true teacher.

The ego-centric selleth his knowledge
And poison he earneth and eateth. * 20

It is true that the present day teacher works in a situation altogether different from that conceived by the Gurus. He is a member of a huge organization being pressurized social, economic and political forces and is very often not in a position to do what he wants to do. But the truth is that he will not experience joy unless he is a person deeply interested in his

role. Gurus concept of the teacher is elevating and inspiring even for the instructors of today. Like the modern educationists, the Gurus believe that every child is endowed with infinite potentialities which can be made to blossom under the personal care of the teacher through proper efforts. "In the mine of the human soul there are so many gems and jewels of faculties waiting for development only if one cares to listen to the voice of the teacher."

"The gems, jewels, rubies are in the mind
If one were to find
Should hearken to the Guru's call
It is he who giveth to each and all
On Him, On Him, O let me call." * 21

No less worthy is the example of the pupil. The present day student asks for more freedom. But if the freedom is not coupled with devotion to teacher, humility in learning, hard-work, simple and pure living, it will do more harm than good. The qualities of pupil outlined by the Gurus must certainly make the present day pupil an ideal scholar and a devoted seeker after truth.

The Guru's concept of discipline based on freedom and self-endeavours on the one hand, devotion, obedience and reverence for the teachers and parents on the other hand, can certainly serve as a guide line for the modern undisciplined youth. Their concept of discipline based on self-restraint leads to personal as well as social salvation.

In the Gurus we find a very cordial relationship between the teacher and the taught. The disciple serves his teacher with the fullest dedication and devotion. He has abiding faith and love for him. The teacher owns him as his own child. He looks after the interests of his pupil with motherly care.

"As the mother brings up her son
And keeps him always in view
She feeds him constantly
And caresses him every moment
So does the true Guru keep a disciple." * 22

This is what Gandhi Ji says in the modern world, "The teacher has a mother's role to play. One who cannot take the place of a mother cannot be a teacher." * 23

This close relationship between the teacher and taught has got its own healthier effects. The intimate touch of the personality of the teacher transforms the life of the pupil. Lehna becomes Angad, the flesh of his master's flesh and the bone of his master's bone. There remains no difference between the teacher and the taught. The Guru bows before the disciple and hails him as the Guru.

"The Guru is in the Sikh (disciple),
The Sikh (disciple) in the Guru,
For both promote the instructions of the Guru (God)." * 24

"He who lives the right life is my disciple
Nay, he is my master and I am his servant." * 25

This intimate teacher-taught relationship is the need of the hour. The relationship between the teacher and the taught is becoming formal day by day. Due to large number of students in the class the teacher does not know even the names of his students. What to say of close relationship! The present teacher works more for monetary motives. He is losing the needed dedication to the teaching profession. The students are also losing the old reverence and respect for the teacher. They also feel that they pay the teacher and they learn. The concept of ideal teacher taught relationship of Gurus can serve as a source of great inspiration in the present situation.

Education for Social Reconstruction

In ancient India it was considered a moral duty of a student to pay back the debt of his education in the form of service to society after the completion of his education. Society had provided him facilities to get education. To make society better he was obliged to help in educating the society, to promote social efficiency and happiness. * 26 True to ancient seers of the country, Gurus believe that the school is to work for the upliftment of the society as a part of its religious duty. And the society is bound by dharma to promote education. This reciprocity is unfortunately not being fully appreciated and recognized in our country. Education can play its vital role of building the nation if we could just listen to this sane advice of Guru Nanak that true purpose of education is achieved by him alone who works for the good of other people.

"Comprehension of learning consists in doing good to others." * 27

In these lines Guru Nanak has laid down service of humanity as the chief characteristic of an educated man. The idea of come to learn and go to serve is imbibed in these lines. These words of the Guru are unique in the history of educational thought and practice. This saying has been adopted as a motto by National Service Scheme all over India.

The Gurus hold that man becomes great exactly in the degree in which he works for the welfare of his fellow man and betterment of society. Man should earn his livelihood by honest labour and contribute something out of that for the needy and social reconstruction.

"Those who earn their livelihood
By the sweat of their brow,
And give something out of that to the needy
Recognize the true path." * 28

The Gurus are against amassing of wealth and exploitation of poor on the part of rich. The story of Bhai Lalo and Malik Bhago shows that anything obtained undeservedly is not worth having. Since the Gurus believe in the service of man and society, education of their conception should promote among the young pupils spirit of service, social sensitiveness, co-operation and sacrifice. Guru Nanak says emphatically:-

"We can get an honourable seat in the court of God,
Only when we practice disinterested service in the world
And thus win glory, beauty and joy of life." * 29

This ideal of social service can prove a boon for the modern selfish, self-centred and materialistic society. The prevailing system of education in India can be put on a more satisfactory and sounder foundations if it has its roots in India's cultural and spiritual heritage. The spirit of Indian civilization culture which has been developed through the ages can serve as a beacon light to the modern Indian youth who is fast heading towards western civilization. He is trying to copy their dress, language and ways of living. Sometimes dazzled by the spectacular scientific achievements of the west, he seeks to adopt the western ways of life in the mistaken belief that the ways of dress and imitation of their language will make him modern and launch him on the road to progress.

For social reconstruction and national regeneration, the Gurus have advocated a system of education based on fundamental principles of Indian religion, culture, history and ancient literature. They had abiding faith in the inherent strength of Indian culture. They stood for the revival of our great cultural heritage. All the Gurus were well-acquainted with the cultural traditions of India. All the Janam-Sakhis are unanimous in stating that Guru Nanak sought the company of religious men well-versed in the Indian religious literature of the age to become acquainted with the latest teachings of Indian philosophers and reformers. * 30 He lamented the adoption of foreign culture and language by the people.

"The Kashatriyas have given up their real dharma,
They have adopted the language (culture)
Of the ill intentioned foreign rulers." * 31

He was pained to see the people had changed their tongue and preferred to be greeted in the Muslim fashion.

"They (Hindus) have all assumed the Muslim garb,

Even the language of God has changed
The people are addressing one another as Mian, Mian everywhere." * 32

All the Gurus favoured mother tongue as the medium of instruction. To take education to the doors of the masses, education through mother tongue is very essential. Even the modern educationists and psychologists feel that learning on the part of child becomes easier and faster through his own mother tongue.

Guru Gobind Singh was a man of letters who drew inspiration from the ancient Indian Epic culture. He ran through the range of Sanskrit epic and historical literature. The Indian epics like the Ramayana, the Mahabharata had great appeal for him. Through his various writings he has tried to give a new orientation to Indian philosophy and culture. By his unique re-interpretations of the same, he has tried to infuse a spirit of nationalism in Indians. He compiled Dasam Granth to give such a stirring form to old inspiring myths as may awaken the slumbering Indian masses. He wanted to create the spirit of self-reliance and self-confidence in the Indian youth by reminding him of the greatness of Indian culture. He along with his fifty-two bards produced huge literature steeped in Indian traditions which is still a source of great inspiration to the modern youth. He founded the Nirmala Sect – a class of scholars of Hindu philosophy, through whom he made accessible to all his followers, the old treasure of Indian wisdom and knowledge. * 33 He founded various seats of learning for propagation of education and culture among the masses. "The aim of the university (Anandpur) appears to be the revival of the ancient classics with a view to their diffusion and propagation among the Hindus in general and the Sikhs in particular. The young Guru discovered that the culture of the people was vitally connected with their character and the decay of one led to the deterioration of the other and consequently to the fall of the people themselves. He set about reviving and recreating both the military and the literary traditions of epic India for that was the only means of national rebirth and regeneration. * 34

Education for a Life of Action

"Namdeva asks Trilochana,
Remember the Name of the Lord in heart.
But do work with hands and feet
Attuning yourself to the Lord." * 35

These lines of Kabir embody the philosophy of action of the Gurus. The Gurus were not arm-chaired philosophers. They themselves led the life of action. They believed in the philosophy of 'Karmayoga' of Gita. Even to achieve salvation action is required.

"You live your life making earnest efforts
And make your life happy through right earnings.

Meet thy Lord through contemplation
And your anxieties will be dispelled." * 36

Man can carve out his destiny through his own efforts. * 37 Like modern pragmatists in education also, the Gurus emphasize learning by doing, self-help and dignity of labour. They believe that a disciple or a student can achieve greatness and perfection by self-help and self-guidance. "A good personality is built through right actions." * 38 Enlightenment of life depends upon action. "Right enlightenment can grow in life as a matter of course only if inspired by right action. It is a truth that a man devoid of right action goes on degenerating himself into ignorance and folly." * 39

Even true wisdom is realized through a life of action.

"Wisdom cannot be sought through prattle,
To describe its essence is also hard
Verily, those alone can gain wisdom,
Who through God's grace
Lend the very practical life of action." * 40

Sikh religion is a religion of action. It does not favour the life of a recluse or an ascetic. The example of Banda Bahadur is well-known. He led the life of an ascetic and penance away from society. Guru Gobind Singh went to him and explained to him the futility of such a useless life. He advised him not to waste his energy and power but utilize it for the service of humanity. From Madho Das Baragi, he became Banda Bahadur. From the life of inaction, the Guru brought him into the life of action. The Guru asked him to go to the Punjab, organize the Sikh army and continue struggle against the oppressors. His last message to Banda seems to be:-

"Give me this power, O Almighty,
From righteous deeds I may never refrain,
Fearlessly may I fight all the battles of life
With confident courage claiming the victory,
May my highest ambition be to sing thy praises
And may thy glory be ingrained in my heart,
When this mortal life reaches its end
May I die fighting with limitless courage in the battle of life." * 41

This heroic song of the Guru is a source of inspiration for ever. It is the influence of this philosophy of action of the Gurus that Punjabis have become practical people, always up and doing bubbling with energy and ever ready to be yoked to solve the problems of life.

Aesthetic Development

Aesthetic arts like music, dancing, painting, poetry, literature go a long way in the balanced emotional development of personality. They help to develop creative imagination. Aesthetic education refines one's taste. Refinement of taste makes one cultured. Therefore it should be the business of education to promote in students an intensive love for beauty and art. The wider and deeper these interests are, the better and beautiful the life becomes. Tagore holds that the aesthetic aspect of human life is as important as the intellectual. But this truth is ignored in our scheme of education and pattern of life. "We almost completely ignore the aesthetic life of man leaving it uncultivated, allowing weeds to grow. Music and fine arts are among the highest means of self-expression, without which the people remain inarticulate." * 42 Fine arts have got great humanizing influence. They give sublime pleasure to man, make him polished, refined and civilized.

It is heartening to see that the Gurus have given an important place to music, poetry and literature in their scheme of education. There is blend of poetry and music in Guru Granth Sahib. Mardana was the life-long companion of Guru Nanak. All the Gurus kept bards in their courts. Writing about the beauty of music of the tenth Guru, Dr. Ashta writes, "He has shown his keen love for music. In him we find a saint singing hymnal songs, a soldier giving martial music, a house-holder singing virtues of a good life and a painter creating wonderful pictures in music." * 43 Thus the Gurus regard music as a means of attaining temporal happiness, spiritual joy and transcendental bliss. It sweetens life. For them kirtan (congregational singing) is like an invaluable gem full of bliss and deep in qualities:-

"Music is a priceless jewel,
It produces unfathomable joy,
And all the sorrows depart." * 44

What Guru Arjan says holds good in the modern times even. Gurbani (Divine poetry) is sung in the morning and evening in the religious congregations in the Gurdwaras. The person who sings or recites the divine music or even devotedly listens to it is filled with joy and reverence. The effect of music upon the mind is profound and inspiring. The mind loses itself in devotion and rapture through it and is easily attuned to God. It becomes a means of communication with God.

"When you sing the divine words
Divine music is heard again and again,
The generous Lord has given us this gift,
Through it Light merges into Light." * 45

The mind is by nature mercurial (chanchal) and does not remain steadfast. The divine compositions of the Gurus attuned to music and sung with devotion and love result in Divine Love and the bliss of Divine union.

"Through the harmony of song and instrument,
Transcendental realization is attained naturally." * 46

Through a daily participation in congregational music, the truth of the teachings of the Gurus dawns upon the mind and one gradually learns the eternal truths preached by them. This listening to the Divine music sublimates one's life. Music is the food for the soul. This quality of Shabad Kirtan brought to Sajjan Thug his inner darkness and it also revealed to Seikh Behlol, the light he longed for. That is why Guru Arjan says:-

"Who so ever hears the kirtan of Hari,
Who so ever hears the kirtan of Hari,
Near that person,
No misery can ever come." * 47

Gurbani is written in the verse of highest order. Its lyrics are like the gems of the purest ray serene. The poetry of the Gurus is the valuable possession of the modern times also which gives us inspiration and guidance in every walk of life and helps in the aesthetic development of personality.

Education for Secularism and National Integration.

It is a matter of great concern that in present day Punjab, the gulf between Hindus and Sikhs is widening. Both the communities are drifting apart. Before partition both these communities lived like real brothers. There was a sect of Hindus known as 'Sehajdharis' who were clean shaven but believed in Sikhism. Marriages between Hindus and Sikhs were very common. Eldest son was often made a Sikh. But the state of things is changing day by day. The Sikhs have come to feel that they are different from Hindus and Hindus also view them with suspicion. All the Sikh Gurus were Hindus. Guru Gobind Singh gave the Sikhs a special identity as it was the demand of the times. Guru Teg Bahadur sacrificed himself for the cause of Hindu religion. That is why he is known as 'Hind-Di-Chadar'.

After him (Har Krishan) came Teg Bahadur,
Who protected the frontal marks,
And sacrificial threads of the Hindus,
And displayed great bravery in the kal Age.

When he put an end to his life,
For the sake of holy men.

He gave his head and uttered not a groan,
He suffered martyrdom for the sake of his religion.
He gave his head but swerved not,
From his determination. * 48

The Gurus were not against any religion. Guru Nanak asked the Hindus to become good Hindus and the Muslims to become good Muslims. When he said, "There is no Hindu, no Musalman", he stood for a secular religion based on peaceful co-existence. Guru Gobind Singh fought many battles against the Muslim rulers. He was the enemy of the tyrants and oppressors. He was against the killing of innocent people, children and women because they belonged to a different religion. "My sword strikes tyrants not men". He was not against any sect or creed. He himself says, "The Hindus worship and the Muslim prayer are the same. All men are the same, it is through error that they appear different. Allah and Abhekh are the same, the Puranas and the Quran are the same, they are all alike. It is one God who creates all." * 49 emphasized Guru Gobind Singh.

Mardana, a Muslim was a life-long companion of Guru Nanak. Owing to his liberal teachings, Guru Nanak had Hindus as well Muslim followers. That is why there was a common saying in those days "Nanak Shah Fakir, Hindu ka Guru Muslim ka Pir." Guru Ram Dass asked, Mian Mir, a Muslim devotee to lay the foundation stone of Harmandir Sahib – The Golden Temple at Amritsar. Guru Hargobind and Guru Gobind Singh had Muslims in their army. The noted Muslim saint, Pir Budhu Shah sacrificed his four sons for the sake of tenth Guru. A Muslim couple gave him shelter when he left the fort of Ananadpur Sahib. They helped him to escape unhurt by making him their 'Uch ka Pir'. The Gurus tried to bridge the gulf between different castes and creeds. "God will not ask man", said Nanak, "Of what race and religion you are. He would but ask him, what have you done." True religion does not consist in external practices but in the inward discipline of love, faith, mercy and humility expressed in righteous and Compassionate deeds. The example of Bhai Kanhiya deserves a special mention in this context. He served water to all the wounded soldiers in the battle field irrespective of caste and creed. His motto was:-

"I have forgotten to speak or think ill of any one,
Ever since I learnt to live in the company of the good and holy saints.
No one is my enemy nor is any one stranger to me,
I get on well (am on good terms) with one and all." * 50

To remove the barriers of caste and creed, high and low, rich and poor, the Gurus started the institutions of Sangat (sitting together and singing the praises of God) and Pangat (community dining). At the initiation ceremony, Guru Gobind Singh made all the five Sikhs belonging to different castes to drink nectar from the same bowl. Each Sikh of the Guru was a Bhai, the brother of all. They upheld the cause of down-trodden and lower classes. Guru

Nanak preferred to dine with Lalo, a low caste Hindu than to stay with Malik Bhago a high caste rich man.

Guru Arjan, the fifth Guru was a great prophet of secularism. The most remarkable step he took in this direction was the compilation of Adi Granth. In Adi Granth he not only included the hymns of his predecessors but also sacred writings of other Indian saints imbued with divine love. These saints belonged to different castes and creeds. Jaidev was a Brahmin, Namdev was a calico printer. Trilochan was a vaish. Sadhna was a butcher, Dhanna a farmer, Sain a barber, Kabir a weaver and Ravidas a cobbler. They belonged to different parts of the country. Jaidev was a Bengali, Namdev was a Maharashtrian, Kabir belonged to Banaras, Namdev, Trilochan to Bombay, Dhanna to Rajputana. To take their message of love, goodwill and harmony to the people, they all wrote in the language of the masses.

To push back the wave of conversion of Hindus to Muslim religion and bring about cultural integration, the Gurus exposed the beauty of the Hindu religion. Guru Gobind Singh awakened the people with the help of their cultural heritage. He is one of the greatest poets of Hindi literature. Whole of his Dasam Granth is written in Braj Bhasha. Guru Gobind Singh had a great love for ancient Indian epic literature. He revived ancient Indian classics. The Guru discovered that the revival of the culture of the people was essential for national awakening. He went through the whole range of epic literature in Sanskrit and stored his mind with the soul stirring legends of Mahabharata and Puranas. The Mahabharata was one of the favourite books of Guru Gobind Singh. He himself translated Bhagwat Gita in Punjabi. "I have cast the Dasam of Bhagwat into Hindi with no other desire than only for the love of the holy war." * 51 The stories of Ram destroying the Demon King of Lanka, the son of Devaki crushing Kansa and especially the exploits of that personification of righteousness and divine power called Durga, breaking the skulls and drinking the blood of Mohksur and other demons filled his heart with hope and confidence." * 52 that he too would be able to harness the dormant energies of the vanquished people and free them from the clutches of tyranny and oppression. Guru Gobind Singh was a highly educated man of his age, a versatile genius. He had mastery over Hindi, Sanskrit and Persian. His own contribution to Hindi literature is remarkable. He sent five Nirmalas to study Sanskrit to Banaras who later on taught this language to the Sikhs and translated a huge literature from Sanskrit to Hindi and Punjabi. These Nirmalas were learned scholars steeped in Sanskrit literature and interpreted Sikhism in the light of Vedantic literature. They established various Sanskrit Vidyals. The Sanskrit Vidyals at Kankhal (Haridwar) and Kashi (Banaras) are doing yeoman's service even upto this day for the propagation of Sanskrit language and literature.

The Gurus travelled extensively throughout the whole of India and the neighbouring countries to bring about better understanding, goodwill and ties of friendship among the people belonging to different regions. "Wearing a peculiar pilgrim garb, a combination of the dress of the Hindu sadhu and of the Muslim fakir, Guru Nanak made an extensive tour of all the famous Hindu and Muslim places of pilgrimage, going far to the east

into Assam and Bengal, to the south into Konkan and Malabar and to the west upto Baghdad and Mecca. Every where he had one message, the unity of all religions and the futility of ceremonial worship. * 53 These were some of the steps, the Gurus took to bring about national solidarity, social, emotional, cultural and national integration.

Viewed in the light of above facts, it can be easily said that the Gurus are non-sectarian and non-communal in their teachings. Not the lip-service but the actual understanding of the teachings of the Gurus can remove the gulf between the two sister communities and create cordial atmosphere. Hindus and Sikhs both are one. They are the two sides of the same coin, different branches of the same tree. The Gurus sacrificed their lives for the protection of Hindu.

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